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NEW LIGHT ON BYRON'S LOVES.

II. THE ROMANCE OF LADY FRANCES.

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IN September, 1813, Byron accepted an invitation to spend a week or two with his old friend, James Wedderburn Webster,<sup>1</sup> at Aston Hall, near Rotherham. The pair had been at Cambridge together and at Athens (in 1810), but apparently they had met but seldom during the past three years. 'Bold Webster,' as Byron called him, had married the seventeen-year-old Lady Frances Annesley<sup>2</sup> in 1810, and had settled down in the country. The poet had promised to stand godfather to an expected heir, but the child was a daughter, and Webster did not accept his friend's suggestion that she should be called 'Georgina,' or more unconventionally—Byron.

The short first edition of *The Giaour* had been published in May, and the poet was busily adding fresh passages to the 'fragment.' It had been a strenuous year, what with the Lady Oxford affair, the persecutions of Lady Caroline Lamb, the renewal of the correspondence with Miss Milbanke, the sale of Newstead,<sup>3</sup> and the abortive arrangements for going abroad with Lord Sligo. No wonder that the poet was tired, worried and depressed. He thought that he had discovered a quiet haven at Aston, where he found his hostess, a pretty pleasing woman in delicate health, her sister, Catherine, very pale from a cross in her love for Lord Bury and a couple of children who 'only screamed in a low voice.' Webster himself seemed to be the chief drawback to the company. He was not wanting in sense and good nature but he was 'as jealous as jaundice,' and 'ran after every pretty face he saw.'

At the end of a week Byron departed, having, as he said, behaved perfectly well, and coveted nothing but a poodle which his hosts kindly gave him. But he returned a week later, ostensibly to fetch his dog, and of his second visit to Aston, which lasted a fortnight, we have a full and particular account in his almost daily

<sup>1</sup> He was the son of David Webster Wedderburn who assumed the surname of Webster. He was born in 1789, and therefore was a year younger than Byron.

<sup>2</sup> Daughter of the first Earl of Mountmorris. She married Webster when she had only been 'out' two months to get away from an ill-tempered family.

<sup>3</sup> To Mr. Claghton, but the sale was never completed.

letters to his confidante, Lady Melbourne.<sup>1</sup> This time he reported that his hostess was pretty enough, but not surpassing—'too thin and not very animated—but a something interesting enough in her manner and figure.'<sup>2</sup> Byron's reputation as a *roué* had preceded him, Webster was suspicious, and the lady evidently expected to be attacked and was prepared for a brilliant defence—'but I should never think of her.' Only three days later, however, (on October 3) he reports that he has had a good deal of conversation with an interesting person who shall be called 'Ph'; in fact, he has made love to her, and if words mean anything, his love is returned. He had next taken an imprudent step with pen and paper, and his billet had received a very unequivocal answer; the lady had confessed her love, and had received a ring under her husband's nose. 'And yet she is a thorough devotee and takes her prayers morning and evening, besides being measured for a new Bible once a quarter.'

By the end of a week Byron declares that he is entirely absorbed in this new passion and ready to go any lengths—flight, duel or divorce. He now discovers that Lady Frances is fearfully romantic and singularly warm in her affections, though possibly of a cold temperament. She is clever and accomplished, except that her style is too *German*,<sup>3</sup> no dashing or desperate talker, but never saying a silly thing. They were so seldom left alone together—the husband haunted them and the younger sister had sharp eyes—that they were obliged to sit up all night writing notes, and came down to breakfast looking like ghosts.

The Websters went on to Newstead with Byron for a week, and there the lovers had more opportunity of *tête-à-tête* meetings. Byron was eager for flight, but the lady, though vowing that she would love him for ever, refused to yield to his entreaties—partly because such a step would probably result in a duel with her husband, and partly because she knew that she could not endure the reflection of her guilt thereafter. Meanwhile they were 'all as wretched as possible,' and Lady Frances lost her appetite so completely that she appeared to be going into a 'decline.'

There is a large packet of the letters and notes from 'Fanny,' as Byron called her, written at this time or later. They are all in the high romantic vein, but the girl—she was only twenty—was

<sup>1</sup> These letters are published in his *Correspondence*, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> She was fair, with dark-blue eyes, long black lashes and a white-rose complexion.

<sup>3</sup> 'German' seems to have meant ultra-romantic.

resolute to resist temptation, even though she was breaking her heart for her lover.

While they were still under the same roof (at Newstead) she wrote to him :

'Promise to love me and not let my circumstances separate your heart from mine. I am ready to make any vows, to swear before God that nothing will alter me. Do not abuse my confidence. You have not, and I am grateful to you for your forbearance, but I am resolute. I love dearly—I more than love—but *never* will survive my *fall*. I wrote last night to you, but was ashamed in the morning to have confessed my guilty passion. I am not so cold as you imagined me, and I invoked every blessing upon you for not having taken advantage of my *imprudent*, my *unguarded* situation. I fear you must despise and hate me; for pity's sake do not, for till I knew you I knew not what it was to adore a person and I could have appeared before my God perfectly pure and unspotted.'

Fanny gave her lover a seal in return for his ring, and asked for no other token than a miniature and an 'exchange of *chevelure*.' Among her letters are two curls of beautiful chestnut hair. One is wrapped in a little note<sup>1</sup>—for they were still together—

'I enclose your request. Will you forget me? Oh no, I think you will not—at least you will pity her who suffers so much for you. What a heavenly disposition have you shewn to *him* to-day. My heart is closer cemented to you every moment. Do not throw me off—my life is wrapt up in your good opinion—therefore preserve me. Adieu—we shall soon meet. Till then I cannot say farewell.'

The day after Byron's departure Fanny sat down and wrote him a letter of eighteen pages in the neatest of tiny hands, without blot or erasure. No wonder that he said: 'When a woman takes up a pen, she never knows when to lay it down again.'

'For two hours,' she assures him, 'I have been sitting with my pen in my hand, unable from the force of my "cold feelings" to form a letter. . . . I cannot yet discover what influence supported me under the agony of yesterday. For an hour I sat in

<sup>1</sup> It is labelled 'Fanny. Hair. 1813.' Byron, in the first sonnet to Geneva, speaks of

'Thine eye's blue tenderness, thy long fair hair  
And the wan lustre of thy features.'

the window, the tears trickling down my cheeks<sup>1</sup>—I felt death would have been an acceptable visitor even then. But when you entered—when the moment of torture arrived, when I felt my hand locked in yours for the *last time*—and stole a look at that *too dearly cherished countenance*—when necessity forbade me throwing my arms round and *breathing out my soul in sorrow* on your *neck*—'twas then I felt the true horror of separation—desperation marked my countenance which has now settled in silent despair.'

It was fortunate that Webster, who was going up to town with his friend, thought that *he* was the cause of all this emotion. He observed that his wife so doted on him that she was overwhelmed with grief when he left her—even for a week.

Fanny had been told—by her mother—that Byron was inclined to triumph in his conquests rather too publicly, but she trusts in his honour never to betray her. It was Lady Blessington who said that the poet was incapable of keeping any secret, however it might concern his own honour or that of another. Thus, he did not scruple to send on poor Fanny's letters to Lady Melbourne.

'I cannot consider,' he explains, 'my trust in you as betraying her; if she is serious so am I, and as willing as ever to go on with the business. . . . Perhaps you will think the worse of me for sending them—if I were not in earnest I should not; but I want your judgment about her. I can't be impartial.'

His mind, he says, a few days later (November 4) is 'in such a state of fermentation, that as usual I have been obliged to empty it in rhyme, and am in the very heart of another Eastern tale.' This was, of course, *The Bride of Abydos*, written in a week, with Lady Frances as the white-rose heroine—Zuleika. She, poor thing, eating her heart out in the country, could only find solace in writing long passionate letters. Her lover, now in the fine frenzy of inspiration, did not answer as punctually as she desired, and so, on October 29, came the agonised appeal:

'Great God! have I forfeited your regard even? I have—I must be forgotten. Three days have I anxiously, madly waited for the post, but alas! three times have I been miserably disappointed! What *does* it mean? Oh, Byron, I am dead between hope and fear. When I confessed how much depended on my hearing from you, what can I imagine? That you have thrown me off—that you will betray me? No, it cannot be—I will banish

<sup>1</sup> Byron speaks of her as a 'younger Niobe.'



the unjust, the illiberal idea. Alas, I fear you are offended with me, I fear you hate me for opening my whole heart before you, and pity me for the *discovery* you there made.'

'Ph<sup>1</sup> is very angry at me for not writing,' Byron complains to Lady Melbourne, '(after telling me it was impossible without *ruining* her), and supposes that I *must* have told everybody, and is particularly afraid that I—I by myself—should confide it to W. W. !'

The husband probably had his suspicions, but as Byron had just lent him a thousand pounds he did not wish, perhaps, to see too much. He slyly suggested that the poet should become a *prétendant* for the hand of Lady Catherine, his young sister-in-law. This plan he revealed to his wife who wrote in anguished protest to her lover that she could not endure the thought of his marriage to a near relation.

'I never could support the idea of injuring her, even in thought, and I could not command my feelings. . . . The distracting thought of seeing you in the arms of another would make me burst the bonds of prudence. You wonder at my horror, at my fear of your marriage. I feel I must always love you—that love would be doubly criminal if its object were bound to another. What are you going to say to Catherine? *Take care!* I am desperate—*very desperate.*'

That particular scare passed away, for the time being, but, there was always the fear that a letter might go astray and the secret correspondence be discovered. Byron declared that he was not unwilling this should be the case, as it would hasten a crisis one way or the other.

'Webster's first impulse will probably be *martial*, but if I have a *motive* I don't mind that; it will at least leave her for the survivor, and the *survived* won't feel the want of her.'

Fanny wrote that her husband had the greatest possible liking and regard for Byron, more so than for any person he knew.

'Does not that show,' she asks, 'the blindness of human nature, and how easily mankind is deceived? May he always be deceived, and I, great God, am the base instrument of deception, but in this instance concealment is not a crime, for it preserves the peace and happiness *d'un marito*—the contrary would involve all in misery and worse.'

<sup>1</sup> Fanny is always referred to as 'Ph.' in these letters.

The *naïveté* of this letter amused her lover who, in describing it to Lady Melbourne, says, 'The simplicity of her cunning and her exquisite reasons! She vindicates her treachery to Webster thus—' here he quotes her remark that it was no crime to deceive *un marito* and adds, 'she says it all in perfect persuasion that she has a perfect conception of the fitness of things and the beauty of virtue.'

Towards the end of November Fanny was to be carried off to Scotland to stay with her husband's relations, where she would have few opportunities of writing, and she begs for a miniature which will be her only consolation. And Byron reports that 'Caroline<sup>1</sup> has at last done a very good-natured thing; she sent me Holmes's miniature for a *friend leaving England*, to which friend it is now making the best of its way.' Fanny was eagerly awaiting the picture, which he must never, *never* ask for back—not even for his wife. 'Shall I find your new poem in Edinburgh?' she asks. '*The Giaour* (my dear companion) I have read till the book is no longer of use—it is printed on my heart. Forgive my tortured wild brain—*rapelle toi quelque fois de moi*.'

Before her departure she sent him a lyric called 'Concealed Griets,' which he forwarded to his confidante. The lines are not his, as she will see by the handwriting, but he is not certain that they are 'Ph's,' though from the cast of thought they are very like her.<sup>2</sup> 'I received them this morning (November 25) and think them very pretty; pray tell me if they are, for seriously, I am a very erring critic.' A couple of verses may be quoted from the lyric which Byron thought 'very pretty.'

'Amid gay Folly's thoughtless scene  
How hard to act a borrowed part,  
The careless ease of mind to feign  
While sorrow wrings the tortured heart.

Faintly to force a languid smile—  
Perhaps it hides the starting tear,  
Or should a moment's mirth beguile  
The next brings anguish more severe.'

There is now a gap in the correspondence. Fanny was staying with Scottish relations who kept the post-bag in their own hands, and it was not till December 28 that she was able to send a long

<sup>1</sup> Lady Caroline Lamb.

<sup>2</sup> He also mentions the lyric in his journal. Jeaffreson thought it was sent by Miss Milbanke.

letter, dated 'At the foot of the Grampians.' She is free for one hour, and may pour out the weight of grief which swells her almost bursting heart. She has just read *The Bride of Abydos*, and quotes 'That oath tho' sworn by one hath bound us both.'

'Zuleika,' she continues, 'perhaps thy fate may be mine. Dearest Byron, art thou still my Selim?' She is melancholy and sullen and a prey to terrifying thoughts. 'What do you do with my letters? My peace—happiness—all is lost—it wants but my character to make my destruction complete.<sup>1</sup> . . . You have never given me one assurance that my secret is buried in your breast for ever.'

Byron was curious to know if Lady Melbourne thought that 'Ph' was sincere. He rather suspected that she was 'embarrassed with constancy.'

'Her date is the *Grampian Hills*, to be sure. With that latitude and her precious *epoux*, it must be a shuddering kind of existence. . . . We shall not meet till the Spring. By that time it is impossible she should not be altered; and even if not, I shall not fool away my time on theories and that stupid speculative reverie of Platonics in which I was obliged to humour her fears or her coquetry.'

The poet was now in the full spate of composition. He had written *The Corsair* as soon as *The Bride* was finished, and two *Sonnets to Geneva*<sup>2</sup> into the bargain. Thus he had relieved his soul and celebrated his love. Now the fatal three months—the time limit that he set for a passion—had expired. It is evident that he was wearied by the sighs and prayers of a woman who, though she loved him passionately, had wounded his vanity by resisting him. It was all very well to *sing*:

'Remember him whom Passion's power  
Severely—deeply—vainly proved;  
Remember thou that dangerous hour  
When neither fell, though both were loved.'

But when it came to plain prose he was to write to his confidante, who had twitted him on the rapidity with which he could get the better of his inclinations:

<sup>1</sup> It appears from their unpublished letters that both Lady Caroline Lamb and Mrs. Chaworth Musters had heard scandal about Lady Frances and Byron.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Frances had inspired the *Geneva Sonnets*, and also apparently the heroine of *The Corsair*, who was named, successively, Francesca, Geneva and Medora.

'What was there to get the better of? A few kisses for which she was no worse and I was no better.' The way out of that foolish business was quite easy and he did not see that he had much to reproach himself with.<sup>1</sup> Lady Melbourne's earlier letters, which, no doubt, had contained valuable criticism and advice, are not in this collection, but for January 16, 1814, there is a long unpublished screed in which she deals with 'Ph's' letter from the Grampians. It seems to have touched even her cynical heart.

"The oath, tho' sworn to one, hath bound us both"—rather wild even in theory, but it must be said by a person quite ignorant of the *practice* in such cases—how you might be bound without even knowing it—and to what? Really to be constant—does not that frighten you? Don't you blush at the question? "Are you my Selim?" In what manner *could* you answer this letter? You could not even make use of your favourite basis—truth—not even swear to it. You must have given it up, or talked entirely of the past—perhaps that might have satisfied this poor little ignorant girl. There is much simplicity in many parts of her letter. I am very sorry for her, as I believe she is very sincere, and you must believe that she loves you dearly—though you will hardly own it to yourself. You have imbibed such ideas of the deceit practised by all women that you would never confess that you had any dependance on their constancy. And yet such things have come to pass, and from all I have heard of her character and actions, I am impressed with a belief that all that she says is true, and that she is not at all, as you expressed yourself, "embarrassed with her constancy." My opinion is that you were never *so* loved before, or you would know better how to appreciate her feelings. After all this I think her a little childish and now and then tiresome.'

This letter must have crossed one from Byron, also dated January 16, in which he says:

'I wonder what you think of 'Ph's' letter. I am growing rather partial to her younger sister, who is very pretty, but fearfully young—and I think a fool. The marriage would in some degree be a *revenge*, and in the very face of your compliment (ironical I believe) on the want of selfishness, I must say that I can never quite get over the "not" of last summer.'

Three days later Lady Melbourne was again dealing with the situation in the most thorough-going fashion.

<sup>1</sup> Lady Caroline Lamb said that Lady Frances was ridiculously affected.

'I take some credit to myself for discovering that it would be difficult for you to answer PH's letter; those who believe in C (Caroline) think falsehood is so easy to you that you prefer it to truth; you see I judged otherwise. What another! a young one coming up in succession! Not content with five or six I know of—and twenty I don't—you are looking after another. Well, be it so—and I only pray that this one may go on, as it will settle all the others in the best manner possible. What is she—fourteen or fifteen? <sup>1</sup> And you say a fool—how should you know? Believe me, tho' so young, she is old enough to conceal a great deal of character. There is so much shyness at that age in general that it obscures all their ideas, and they can speak clearly on no subject. If she has no present unamiable qualities it is most likely she will turn out well; when these appear it is hopeless, for living in the world generally increases them, and only softens them in appearance—witness C.

'You estimate the force and truth of a person's liking by the correspondence they commit (C always told me so)—now I think it a false way of judging, and that a person's conduct depends upon their character. A woman who respects *les bienséances*, and is driven from them by a strong passion, gives you the greatest proof of attachment, but she still adheres to propriety and decorum in trifles when she has given it up in reality; and is much more to be relied on and believed than one of those whimsical ladies who defy the world and run headlong into every sort of imprudence, and call it Violent Love which cannot be controlled.<sup>2</sup> I don't think Ph deserves that name. You differ from me, I know, because you have as yet only seen one sort of woman—or to express myself more clearly—women of one turn of mind. I think you understand what I mean, and your anger with Ph convinces me that I am right.'

Byron had now been drawn into a sentimental correspondence with his old love, Mary Chaworth Musters, who was about to be separated from her husband. She was living at Edwalton Hall, not far from Newstead, and had asked him to come and see her. Naturally, he had confided this also to Lady Melbourne, who continues:

'I long to hear something on which I can form an opinion of M—and as you are engrossed entirely by that friendship, I shall say no more of the others—*les autres (dans le grand pluriel)*—

<sup>1</sup> She must have been more than fifteen, for she had been crossed in love for Lord Bury in 1813, and this year—1814—she married Lord John Somerset.

<sup>2</sup> A hit at Caroline.



how odd that sounds, and yet you have some pretensions to sentiment!! according to your own interpretation of the word.'

It was easy enough, as Byron said, to get out of the affair with poor 'Ph.' Her letters were unanswered, and there came no word of regret and farewell, but she professed to be resigned to her fate.<sup>1</sup>

'It is as I expected,' she exclaims, 'and I blush while I write—it is as I deserved. All hope is fled and I am content—I am satisfied. But I cannot banish the memory of those happy days I have passed in your society, when I have sat for hours lost in pleasing reflections. But no more. Perhaps you have shown my letters, and oh! distressing thought, talked of me in a manner I tremble to think of. If you have, be candid, pronounce my doom at once. . . . My mind is torn by the dreadful idea of appearing before the world an object of contempt. You have acted your part, and glad I am to have seen it so soon. I must implore you to return my foolish letters wherein I poured out my whole heart before you, and would I could say those feelings were changed, or capable of being changed. . . . I wish to think of you as generous and honourable—I wish to think you devoid of treachery—and that you have not deceived me. Let me think so—and though I think your professions were only the effusions of a momentary warmth, yet you have nothing to fear from them. Remember your lines—I now apply them—

"Remember me—Oh! never pass my grave  
Without one thought whose relics there recline."'

By February 1 Fanny was back at Aston, and although she had assured her lover that he would never hear *of* or *from* her again, she sends 'a few last lines' to beg him to return her seal. Her husband had been asking for it, and, if she could not produce it, she would be obliged to get another cut.

'I hear from my sister,' she concludes, 'that you are gone to yours, but I know better. I know where you are—happy, happy woman!'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered, in mitigation of this callousness, that Byron 'in the days of his glory,' was so pestered and persecuted by the devotion of romantic women (not only those of his acquaintance but also of anonymous admirers) that he could hardly feel much respect for the sex. Moreover, the rapidity with which he could—admittedly—'get the better of any passion'—led him to think and hope that his ex-loves—more especially Lady Frances and Lady Caroline—would speedily find new objects on which to lavish their affections.

<sup>2</sup> Byron was weather-bound at Newstead with Mrs. Leigh. He did not accept Mary Chaworth's invitation to visit her, but he entered upon what he called a 'sickly sentimental correspondence' with her. Though only twenty-eight she was in poor health physically and mentally, and she found her chief pleasure in writing nearly every day to her old friend, sending him flowers, and netting him a purse.

'One word more—you know not how I love your sister. I never felt so great a regard for any other woman. Do not make her despise me—perhaps I may know her some day. Do you think she *would* know me?'<sup>1</sup>

Thereafter there was silence till the following June when Fanny made yet one more appeal for the return of her letters.

'Will not the sight of this well-known hand astonish you?' she asks. 'Nay, start not—you have nothing to fear.'

'I feel I cannot much longer support the recollection of some events which for many months have embittered every moment. And as I am sensible the time is not far distant when all will be alike to me, I do not wish to leave a single memento in existence of my *past*—my *only* folly. Therefore, by every power of heaven and earth—by the recollection of— Stop, they must be buried in oblivion—by your every hope hereafter—I implore you to return my letters, if now in your possession. I implore you on my knees—I beseech you with uplifted hands—to grant my petition.'

'You may think ill of me, but I solemnly assert that until I knew you I was as innocent as my child. You know the conflict I sustained—you also know my triumph over myself. . . .'

Byron, who seems to have collected love-letters as eagerly as an Indian chief might collect scalps, asked Lady Melbourne what he should do about 'Ph.'s' effusions. 'By her own account,' he says, 'they run great hazard on their way to her. I am willing to give them up, but she says nothing about mine.' He had not thought so much of hazard when he was writing to Aston by nearly every post, and when, if a letter had gone astray, he might have had to risk his life in a duel.

The romance was over, but the Byron-Webster story was not yet at an end. In the autumn of 1815 the Websters were at Brussels where a son was born to them. On September 5 Lady

He answered at long intervals. In July Mrs. Chaworth and her companion came to London, but Byron had fled to Hastings with Mrs. Leigh. Mary Chaworth, therefore, engaged rooms in the same hotel at Hastings that the poet was occupying, but again—when she arrived—he had departed. Shortly afterwards she went out of her mind—temporarily—and used to sit reading the poems her old love had written to her, and weeping over them. This incident inspired Byron's poem, *The Dream* (1817). She seems to have recovered in 1816, and in 1817 she was reconciled to her husband. Her unpublished letters afford no ground whatever for the theory that she had a *liaison* with Byron in 1813-14, and that she was the mother of Medora.

<sup>1</sup> Byron said (in 1821) that all his ex-loves made a point of calling upon his sister. 'The year before last Lady F. W. W. walked in upon her. It is a very odd fancy they all take to her.'

Frances, in a formally worded letter, asks Byron to stand god-father to the child.

'MY DEAR LORD BYRON,—' [she writes]

'I have partaken in Mr. Webster's disappointment that he has not heard from you, or indeed scarcely of you since an event that, as it has fixed your destiny, so will it, I trust, insure your every happiness this world can afford. I have heard much of the *amabilité* of the Lady Biron<sup>1</sup> and I believe her in every way worthy of that name, and I conceive that to be no common compliment. I fear our sojourn here, and the little chance of your visiting France, will give me no opportunity of the pleasure of her acquaintance for a long time to come.

'Mr. W. has a great wish that what was talked of with my little girl should be realised with my boy—that of being christened after you. He tells me he has written to you on the subject, but thought it necessary I should be a party to the request. I hope the name (if he bears it) which has given so many beauties to the age, may, in maturer years, at least impel him with the desire to be a pupil in the school of so great a master. I was concerned to hear poor Newstead was to be again sold. I had hoped it would revert to you. As it is, it has in a degree deprived your friends of the grateful memories of the happy hours they may have passed there during your time. I feel much interest in my old friend, Murray,<sup>2</sup> and trust that he is not a part of the purchase.

'I hope you will let us hear from you soon—and believe me.

'My dear Lord Biron,

'Ever truly yours,

'F. WEDDERBURN WEBSTER.'

The boy was duly named Byron Charles, but died before he was three years old. When Byron heard the news he 'almost chuckled with joy and irony,' and said to Webster, 'Well, I told you so—I told you that my name would damn any thing or creature.'

During her stay in Brussels Lady Frances became acquainted with the Duke of Wellington, who evidently took an interest in her, for at 3 a.m. on the morning of Waterloo he sent her a hasty note, urging her to leave the city. There was some gossip about the pair, and unpleasant suggestions appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*. For example the public was informed that

'In the letter W there's a charm half-divine,  
War, Wellington, Wedderburn, Webster and Wine.'

<sup>1</sup> At this time the name was spelt indifferently Byron and Biron.

<sup>2</sup> An old servant.

It was alleged that the 'injured husband' had laid his damages at £50,000, and that a public subscription was on foot to defray the expenses of the 'gallant Defendant.' The Duke, apparently, took no notice of the paragraphs, but Webster brought an action for libel against Baldwin, the proprietor of the *Morning Chronicle*. The case came on in the Court of Common Pleas on February 16, 1816. It was stated that in June, 1815, Lady Frances was living in her father's house at Brussels, and that she had never been alone with the Duke of Wellington. The Duke of Richmond gave evidence that he also was in Brussels in June, 1815. Lady Frances, whose general deportment and character were excellent, was on visiting terms with his wife and daughters, and he had subsequently met her at the house of the Duchess of Wellington in Paris. The judge (Chief Justice Gibbs) said that he required no further evidence as to character and Baldwin called no witnesses nor attempted to justify himself.<sup>1</sup> The damages were assessed at £2,000. John Murray sent an account of the affair to Byron, who replied in sardonic vein: 'I thank you for the account of Mr. and Lady F. W. W.'s triumph: you see by it the exceeding advantage of unimpeachable virtue and uniform correctness of conduct.'

In 1820 another son was born to the Websters, but in 1821 Lady Frances left her husband and took her children with her. Both parties wrote to Byron, the wife appealing for sympathy in her troubles, the husband for help towards a reconciliation. The poet seems to have been anxious to bring the pair together again, and there was a friendly interchange of letters between Lady Frances and himself. On February 7, 1823, she wrote to him at Genoa to thank him for a kind letter and for the still kinder interest that he had taken in her unhappy affairs.

'Your wish to effect a reconciliation between my husband and myself,' she continues, 'is the offspring of a generous, noble mind, but you are, I suspect, totally unacquainted with the cruel circumstances which forced me to abandon my home, and rescue my unhappy infants from the grasp of one who had violated every tie, and proved himself divested of the most common feelings of human nature.'

She felt compelled to intrude a long explanation upon him and

<sup>1</sup> He expressed contrition, and said that the paragraphs had been inserted by the Editor during his absence from town.

if, after patient perusal, he said, 'Lady Frances, live with your husband,' it should be done.

'But oh! how changed must that noble mind be if it does not start in horror at the conduct of a man who laboured to destroy the character of a woman and that woman his wife. My duty to myself—to my children—to all society—demands that I should never see him again. . . . How cruelly has he destroyed his own happiness, for even when I came from England with him, in 1821, he was sure of all I could bestow—for regret for an *égarement* which the misery of a pained heart hurried me into.'

Sir James—he had been knighted in 1822 'for writing against the Queen'—had never paid a penny for the maintenance of his children, and though he swore they were not his, she was afraid he would attempt to steal them. She signs herself 'Ever yours affectionately,' and sighs in a postscript: 'would that Genoa were nearer!'

On March 24 she writes again to thank him for another sympathetic letter, and adds,

'that I prize your friendship and value it beyond all this world holds for me is indeed true, and the happiest, the proudest feeling to me is contained in those few words, "Consider me your friend"—not in the world's definition of the sacred name. No! that lovely passion which Byron alone can understand—Byron alone can feel.'

On April 23 she warns him that he must prepare for a long, dull, selfish letter: 'All Paris is raging with indignation at what I am sure will enrage you.' It appeared that Sir James had contrived to kidnap his little boy, who was in wretched health, had carried him across the border to Nantes<sup>1</sup> and handed him over to *mauvais sujets*. He had abused Lady Frances to his valet and had slandered her to her friends and relations, describing her as a woman of gross appetites, 'ready to rush into the arms of any man.' She had no funds wherewith to rescue her boy, or make her children wards in Chancery.

It sounded a pretty hopeless case. But, earlier in the year, while Sir James was travelling in Italy he had met Byron in Genoa, and had shown him a portrait of Lady Frances and some of her

<sup>1</sup> Sir James had a house and a private printing press at Nantes. He fancied himself a poet, and published a dull ode on Waterloo (which was 'cut up' by the *Quarterly*) and a couple of epitaphs—one on his bull-dog and one on Byron, who was still alive.



letters about the quarrel. Writing to Webster on February 2 Byron said:

'The picture you sent will accompany this note. It is indeed a sad remembrance and I can with difficulty trace any resemblance at least to my memory of the Original.<sup>1</sup> The letters are still more melancholy but I see nothing in them to prevent a reconciliation if both parties would but condescend a little to their own eventual happiness and that of their children.'

A reconciliation did take place, perhaps through Byron's intervention, and another son was born in 1827.

Zuleika, Geneva, the White Rose—already withered and drooping—lived on till 1837, thus surviving her lover just thirteen years.

<sup>1</sup> Tom Moore met Lady Frances at a ball at Devizes in 1819, when they spoke much of Byron. He says: 'She must have been very pretty when she had more of the freshness of youth, though she is still but five or six and twenty, but she looks faded already.'

*(To be continued.)*

### THE QUEST.

I GAVE my heart to Beauty  
In childhood's happy day;  
So fair her face  
'Twas hard to trace  
The hidden feet of clay.

Upon the sad awakening  
In testing-time of Youth  
I shut my eyes  
To surface lies,  
And fell in love with Truth.

The eyes of Truth shone coldly,  
No love-lit fires they knew.  
But now I find  
These two combined,  
Perfected, Love, in you!

ALISON CLARE.

## BLUE WATER.

BY EVA LEIGH.

HERE is the beach, white as ever under the ageless sun ; the pines in whose branches I lean are friends of the old days. But where our galley made fast there is no quay and the fishermen's huts are sand along the shore. Houses fairer than the temples of my childhood fill the green cup of hillside above the bay, but when I came to this place on a bright morning many thousand sun-rises ago, the columns *Æmilii* set up ran from edge to edge of the valley, the blue-tiled temple at the south point twin to the Governor's blue house on the north, turquoise clasps on a fillet of pearls.

I am a gleam in the sunshine, more insubstantial than foam, one with the essence of the pines and the wind that makes them sing. I, free to wander far as cloud may drift, linger here, content, because in this place there came upon me all human fulfilment of delight, and presently sorrow, and then death so calm, so friendly, that I could not fear it—no miserable sick lingering but a clean thrust whence my spirit flowed back into the living air that conceived it.

Surely the gods have appointed a place of rest for him also, but not in the upper air nor on earth nor beneath the sea ; his was a soul full grown to manhood and such the gods take to their own heaven.

I was a girl of nine when my uncle Porphyrión came home to Chios. At next harvest-time my father died and my uncle took me into his own house. My mother, wedding again, bore me five sisters, dark-eyed and plump, in the image of their Syrian sire.

My uncle was by trade a lapidary, by nature an adventurer. The two agreed very well to his mind, but my aunt felt otherwise, and when he sailed for Alexandria, a storm lashing up behind him and mere rumour of uncut emeralds to tempt him from her, my aunt mourned six moons long and then accepted a silk-merchant from Tyre who kept great state. One could hardly reproach her, this voyage of my uncle's lasted five years.

He was past middle age when he returned, and it seemed that his wanderings had sufficed him for awhile. Me he treated as a woman rather than a child and as a man companion rather than a woman, teaching me his art in gems, the speech of the Romans, masters of the Western world, and the philosophies of Greece. I learned to swim unafraid amongst the rocks off-shore, to draw a bowstring and throw a javelin, accomplishments, as my mother said, most improper to my age and sex.

We would sit, Porphyryon and I, at the open front of his house, and while his lips spoke, patient with my forgetfulness of yesterday's lesson, his fingers never faltered from the intricate gem-work prized throughout our island. And I, proud of my master, squatted cross-legged on the mats, my lap full of seed-pearls strung to make bracelets for the ladies who idled by, mincing in their sandals, great henna'd eyes languishing at my uncle, for he was a handsome man, though not tall, silky-bearded and sweet-voiced. But he took little notice of them except in the way of business, though they allowed him no greater peace for his indifference.

One day I teased him over the emeralds he had sought in Alexandria. 'You have never shown them to me, uncle.'

'I found them, Kalypso—and bought them at a fair price—and sold them again.'

His eyes looked upon memories.

'In Alexandria I met a man bitten as I was with a passion for the unknown, driven by the need for discovery. He would be the first, he vowed, to stand at the source of the mighty Nile. And I swore to companion him.'

'Then you came to the end of our earth, uncle,' for I never doubted he had kept his vow; 'there is no land beyond the source of the Nile.'

He glanced round, his eyes smiled.

'No? Well, I found mud, and great serpents, and more crocodiles than were ever worshipped at Heliopolis, and forests that swallowed the sun, forests that surely spawned the plagues of ancient Egypt, but the source of the Nile I did not find. Sometimes in those forests men followed our tracks, seeking our lives in the darkness, cruel and swift as beasts; and always we travelled south, following the midday sun and the river burning beneath it.'

'Some loathsome thing out of the forests stung Xenophion, my companion, though he had a remedy against most poisons,

and I nursed him in the filthy hut of an old man who took us for gods because of our fair skins, he said. And when he had driven the sickness out of my comrade with incantations to a mud idol and bitter decoctions, he inflamed us both with a worse fever—he showed us gold.

‘It was river-gold washed down from mountains in the southwest, and his hut hid enough to fashion a man-sized idol instead of his clay-and-spittle abomination. Whether he meant us ill or well I am uncertain, but so soon as Xenophion was strong again we left the great river to follow the tributary that brought down gold, and presently the forest thinned to stone and dust and waste unspeakable.

‘In the sandy river-bed we did at first find gold grains, and truly we needed heartening. Two years it had cost us to toil thus far and my emeralds or their worth in barter lay scattered with Xenophion’s talents along the way from Alexandria.

‘After a month’s journey we sighted the mountains, and indeed as we approached, our wonder grew—such mountains were these that beside them the tallest peaks of Greece would seem the toys of children—and strangely, as we neared its source, the river ran no more gold.

‘So we came to the foot of heights no man could hope to climb, death stalking us in that desolation.

‘Xenophion said, “I shall live long enough to choke that black heathen for deluding us. Here is no gold. I promise our mud-worshipper the unpleasant surprise of our speedy return.”

“No doubt the old sorcerer has vowed us to the gods of the region,” I answered. “But like you, Xenophion, I am not disposed to perish here as a sacrifice for the success of his harvest.”

‘So we turned back to the river and our tree-hollowed canoe. I stumbled on the rough beach, and my foot scattered the pebbles.

‘Some amongst them there were that made me ponder, crystal-line yet dull, the size of olives mostly, seeming to have no kinship with the rubble around them.

“Does the river hold this secret also?” I wondered, and, curious of their true nature, I stayed to fill a leather bag, to Xenophion’s amaze and fear, for he thought my brain had sickened with the disappointment.

“In Athens, Xenophion, I learned the science of gems. These are no lifeless pebbles, worthless they may be, but that I shall discover later. Let us go back and throttle our sorcerer.”

'He railed at me for burdening us with rubbish, but he was a good comrade. We parted in his native Alexandria, and I fear he is dead, for he has not kept his promise to visit me here in my old age.'

My uncle's hands lay idle. I hardly dared to speak, though my child's mind, stayed in its fairy-tale, bubbled with questions.

'And you came back safely through the great forests, uncle?'

He pulled my hair. 'Do I seem a ghost, Kalypso?'

'And the pebbles?' I ventured.

He reached into the dimness of a chest where he kept gold wire and gems of small value. My heart leaped when he drew forth a leathern bag, worn with use, but still clearly embroidered in stripes of barbaric fashion, and set between us a stone the size of my finger-tip, cut and polished in scores of facets.

'Why, it is a white topaz,' I said, 'or a crystal.'

He answered almost roughly, 'You know it is not,' and shook the stone in his fingers. Fire flashed in it, out-dazzling the day. My uncle lowered the reed blind that sheltered us from sun and street when they became too oppressive. On the mats he poured out the depths of the bag in a pyramid of light, sparkling even under the twilight of our blind.

'What does one call them?' I whispered.

He smiled.

'And their worth?'

'I have never sought a buyer. There is no jewel like them in the world, for these are jewels, Kalypso, so hard they can be cut and polished only upon one another; the eye of the sun, they come from the heart of earth. Nameless, priceless, here is my legacy to you when I go to the gods.'

'That will not be for years,' I cried, weeping.

'The gods know,' he answered. I was fifteen when they took him from me.

On his death-bed he whispered a tale that haunted me, for his two loves, of gems and marvels, were mine also, and taught by him, I believed that in my heart there was no room for any other. He spoke half in delirium, lying on the house-roof for coolness, and he stayed my prayers with the story.

'It is useless, Kalypso. I have taken a fever from the well-water. I leave my last greatest adventure undared; to you, young, strong, courageous, I commend the quest, the blood-coloured jewels of the East.'



'It is the sun that vexes your eyes, uncle.'

But he drew me down beside him that he might speak softly.

'As the white gems are the sun's glory of noontide, so are these others the pride of his setting. Give me wine.'

I brought it, fearing to increase the fever, yet loath to disobey.

'I do not rave, Kalypso. There was one from the East, darker than any we know, who had it in a dagger-hilt; the murder-stone he called it, and would have proved it so but for my quicker eye. I gave him his life for the jewel, and he wept, such gentle dark eyes he had, at its loss. Later I too lost it; 'twas the colour of the Adonis-flower, big as an almond. I would have sought its fellows, but when I returned from Alexandria you were alone and I stayed here. You shall go instead, the white gems will fetch money—and the voyage will take many moons—thou wilt need money—'

So he raved for days, and although I promised as he wished, only to soothe him, there came upon me, alone in his house with the wailing slave-women, the wild thought that I should indeed go. How empty of beauty and interest life seemed without Porphyryon, and what had I in Chios to hold me? Better I went forth about the world, and why not eastward? I passed through the hot streets to my mother's house.

She sat spinning and my five dark sisters wove the thread. They were soft-handed, giggling, vain creatures, I thought, shrieking in affected high tones at the sight of me.

My mother threw up her hands and listened impatiently as I spoke my mind. 'You are mad, Kalypso, but no madder than your uncle; like him you will go your own way. Who am I to advise you? a poor foolish woman, merely your mother.'

'Why, great stupid,' cried my youngest sister, 'has not Porphyryon left you a bagful of gems, a house above you and two women to keep it?'

'Indeed,' chirruped another, 'he did well, for look at the girl. Can she spin or weave? and what man would take her into his house, such bold eyes as she has, and the bearing of a boy.'

'The house and slaves I leave to you, mother,' I said, and went, despising them.

Some merchant's galley lay always in the roadstead, ready to sail from busy Chios. I found passage easily with a company who had known my uncle and therefore showed me kindness.

'We are bound for Isti in Icaria, from whence you may sail to Cos and Rhodes, even unto Tyre. But what journey do you undertake alone, not even a woman to attend you?'

'I go upon my uncle's business,' I answered.

From Isti, after waiting three days, the only vessel bound for Leros and Cos was still one I mistrusted. The fat Phœnecian owner was too genial for my liking. But it would take us barely four days and nights to make Cos, and I had no wish to linger in Icaria.

We set sail on a clear morn, the only cloud in it my Phœnecian, who sat by me on the deck and made to be friendly. Where I was bound for, and why, my provision for the voyage, such things he asked a hundred times in as many ways. I fear I answered dryly, after my uncle's manner when vexed. At last I said abruptly I was tired and would go below.

By mischance, in rising I stumbled over my cloak, and the wallet of white stones that I carried in its folds dropped at my feet.

'Now I have never seen such embroidery,' said the merchant keenly. 'I have a lifetime's experience of such things, you know.'

'It is an old purse, of no value,' I answered disdainfully.

'But of a curious fashion,' he murmured, and picked up from the planks a stone that had somehow escaped the leathern thongs. 'What is this, a dragon's eye?'

'It is a love-charm,' I said coldly.

'Never have I met woman who needed it so little,' he chuckled, his eyes bold. 'As for travelling with a bagful——'

'Indeed, the purse holds odds and ends, women's baubles.' I took it from him, though his thick fingers clasped my wrist in the doing, and feeling it imprudent to slap his face, descended to the tiny cabin that I must share with his slave-women. One offered me a bowl of fresh water that I might bathe my face and hands—an unwonted luxury at sea, that I owed no doubt to her master's desire for propitiation.

Unbinding my hair, I knelt gazing into the water, the only mirror ever troubled by my reflection. The moon shone in, full and brilliant. It disturbed me that my first compliment should come from such a courtier, and pondering upon my image, my mistrust was not allayed. But I carried a dagger and Porphyryon had taught me tricks of defence seldom known to women. I slept even more soundly than was usual, so that on the first mo-

ment of waking I took the light streaming in upon me for the glow of the setting moon. The cabin was empty save for myself, and as my thoughts cleared I knew the rising sun lay across our bows and we were fast alongside the quay at Leros.

My right arm tingled with numbness, but what it had guarded was gone. I sprang up, forgetting my cloak, my hair streaming from sleep, hearing against the merchant's unctuous voice the dry precise tones of a small man accompanying him, whom I took to be his keeper of accounts.

'It is a Roman colony,' this clerk was saying, as if in dissuasion.

'A few mud huts!'

'—And a Roman governor, one *Æmilius*.'

'I heard that he was exiled here, having fallen into disfavour at Rome. They are all thick-headed sots, this one is probably still snoring off last night's wine, and his women with him.'

'He will pay well for the embroidered stuffs,' urged the other.

'I hope to sell him something better,' and they moved away.

Up the sharp quay steps I followed and saw Leros in the freshness of a blue morning, a white colonnade circling the harbour, to the right a Roman-built tower, huts swarming at its base. The inhabitants chattered about us as the slaves hoisted bales and boxes from the galley's depths, and several donkeys stood awaiting their loads. Into the saddlebags of one, my merchant was calmly stowing the wallet filched from me.

I flew at him without the waste of words, but he made noise enough for two, and the crowd stood astonished at our encounter.

'He, or his slaves at his bidding, robbed me of this as I slept,' I cried.

'Now, by Baal, the girl is demented,' shrieked he, 'was it not enough that in charity I allowed you passage on my ship, would you rob me and take away my good name also? Friends, she came to me without an obolus, begging that I would help her escape the tyranny of an old grandmother. I am too soft-hearted, I might have known such a bold one was but hussy and thief.'

I might have answered him, and more, for often I had heard the women of our markets shriek in defence of their rights and marvelled that they could rage so. But instinct curbed my tongue. I stood back and cried out: 'I will go to the Governor.'

'You are saved the trouble, baggage,' whickered the little dry man; 'here he comes himself.'

I turned and faced him, not twenty paces away. In that first glance I knew a man commanding enough to appear tall, beardless in the Roman fashion that showed the laughter-furrow from nostril to chin, a sad mouth too firm to droop, eyes grey agate in sunlight. His glance, fleeting, yet seemed to last an hour. Two Roman legionaries at his back leaned upon their lances and stared through us all with impartial indifference.

'Noble Æmilius,' chanted the merchants, and such wealth of fable flowed from their lips that I laughed in angry amaze. But at a lift of this Roman's hand, they stuttered into silence.

'Now you, maid,' and, his grave attention upon me, I spoke as I was used, briefly and soberly, and waited.

'Let us see the cause of this dispute.'

The Phœnician had it hugged close, and opened the bag with no good grace. Out on the quay he spilled the glorious contents, to the crowd's admiration.

'These are stones unknown to the Western world,' said the Governor calmly, examining them.

'They are ravished from the depths of Ocean,' intoned the Phœnician. 'Only I know where, at certain seasons, the sun's rays strike so ardent along our coasts that on the cold sea-bed they petrify into jewels. Only our hardiest, most skilful divers, dare venture where these lie, guarded by the coils of the great sea-serpent——'

'They are torn from the vitals of earth,' I cried scornfully, 'and as earth they must remain till the hand of the lapidary frees what his science apprehended beneath the dullness, O dealer in stinking wool and rotten flax, purveyor of womanish fripperies, juggler in weights and measures!'

His hook nose quivered, his eyes gleamed balefire, but the habits of a lifetime served him; he turned again to the Governor, praising the stones as they were his children, dipping podgy fingers through the heap and running it back upon his hands in streams of fire.

'Ay,' broke in Æmilius, 'these are royal stones, though whether fallen from the skies or spewed up by the sea, the gods know. Count them, merchant, art sure none have escaped thy vigilance?'

In his face I read no greed, but strong curiosity, and I guessed that he might hold us all in Leros till truth were sifted from fable. My Phœnician, carried away by his good fortune, made great show of counting the treasure, but the little dark man, keen and

quick as a monkey, was delving in the bag, and on a sudden we all started at his outcry.

'Tis gone, the fairest of the heap!'

'How, gone?' echoed the fat man, with enviable readiness.

'The zone. The girdle-gems. She has them upon her.'

'I have been spied on,' I cried, pale with shame.

For Porphyryon had indeed wrought a zone for me, flexible as silk, so closely set with jewels that the gold link-work showed hardly at all. I had thought the slave-women asleep as I bathed in the moonlight. Or had the small man been watching, had I truly seen more than the shadow of my own hair against the curtain? They pressed upon me, the greedy pair, and I grew sick at their touch.

Æmilius stayed them. 'I will see justice done. Where is this girdle?'

I loosened the shoulder-clasp of my tunic, hiding my face in the folds, and standing thus shamed, I felt a touch upon my bared shoulder, so kindly and yet so firm that I forgot my shame.

'Merchant,' spoke the Roman above my bowed head, 'approach and take what is thine.'

Now I prayed Athene to palsy his fingers. For Porphyryon had delighted in fashioning clasps and locks so intricate that their secret yielded to few, and for this zone he had devised a clasp, baffling even me, accustomed to his skill, till he himself had shown me mastery of it. So I prayed, hearing the merchant's breath labour as he strove, not daring to linger, and presently he too invoked his gods.

'The witch has sealed the clasp with spells, fast as I unlock the wards, they fly shut again.'

The Governor drew the veil from my face, and I saw in his own no great belief in witchcraft. My trembling fingers steadied, feeling again upon them the touch of Porphyryon, till in a moment the glittering corselet swung free in my hands. The crowd fell silent. Æmilius, smiling, looked out over the sea.

'Phœnician, the breeze sets from the shore, and the tide is favourable. Depart unwhipped, for I dislike the smell of blood.'

It was good laughter to see how quickly the pair flurried down the stone steps. Calm, stockish as before, those two helmeted men watched them hoist up the sail and unmoor, nimble with apprehension, while beside the silent Governor I went towards the villa of blue tiles, facing the blue temple across the crescent bay.



I stood before Æmilius in the court of his house, and he shook his head over me. 'You are young and fair to be wandering unprotected, the worth of a province about your waist. What is the meaning of you?'

I told him simply, for to me it seemed so little strange, how I had come from Chios, following a star, even as my uncle had done.

'You have not breakfasted?' he interposed. 'I grow thoughtless.'

We were waited upon by two island girls, graceful enough, yet he was grave with them as a father, seeming not to notice their beauty. I had heard fantastic tales of Roman luxury, this man lived simply as a gardener and spoke as though he despised power, yet his name echoed in my mind with others mighty in the Empire. He split rye cakes and spread them with honey for me, bidding me speak of much concerning Porphyryon, his wisdom and his travels, and, seeing him pleased, I ventured the legend of the eastern lands where the red stones were mined from the hillsides.

'I am to know that country,' I hesitated, not wishing him to think my uncle a liar, 'by the gods men worship there. They are huge as houses set upon four pillars, horned like the moon at her rising, and between the horns hangs a great whip wherewith they slay the worshippers.'

'I have seen elephants, Kalypso. It may well be that in their own country they are sacred, being marvellous wise beasts. Such a land must breed other wonders more terrible, that a strong man might fear to encounter, and you are a young maid.'

'My uncle bred me up to be courageous,' I said sharply; 'I was as a son to him, he despised women and rightly, for they are silly twittering cowards, most of them.'

'I begin to think your uncle was the greater child of the two,' he retorted. 'Yet I should have delighted to meet him. You must not think so poorly of your own sex.'

'Do you not?' I asked on that, and he laughed, surprised.

'What makes you think so?' But I would not say, and again he laughed. 'You are more of a woman than you know, but, Kalypso, how can you imagine I would let you go alone on such a venture?' And for all argument and pleading he stood unmoved.

'You are not afraid, but you should fear. In a month's time a galley calls here from Rome, bound for Byzantium. I have

no right to hold you against your will, but when you go it shall be under the Empire's protection. Till then, this house is your home, and you must promise to do nothing foolish or seek to run away, for I should be vexed.'

He bent his look upon me, and although I knew he was not vexed, I trembled a little, visioning anger in those eyes.

'It is more kindness than I am worth, lord. I shall not reward you by trying your patience further.'

'I will give you letters to those who can serve you in Byzantium, there you will find the value of your jewels and fair payment for them; here in this empty paradise they have no worth.'

I remembered that in the wallet, amongst two hundred loose stones, was one cut square and set in heavy gold that Porphyryion had fashioned in a thumb ring for me through the sultry afternoons. Dumbly, I set it before Æmilius.

'What is this, child?' he smiled, when I would have him take it. 'Why, it is worth my island's revenue for a year; put it away, little one.'

'A royal stone,' I stammered, 'for a royal hand.'

He looked upon me and let me fit the ring to his hand, brown with sun, lean and tense as a drawn sword. And I, thinking on the morning, stooped, kissing the long fingers, and ran from him when, man-like, he would have held and questioned me.

Four weeks I abode in the house of Æmilius, the guest of his Empire and himself, and long ere the bay flashed beneath the sail from Rome, I knew that here lay my fate, and in the mountains of the East the burning stones of a sick man's dream must await another Porphyryion. Here lay my fate, but it seemed that a shroud would be my marriage dress, for he never courted me by so much as a look. He talked indeed, gaily and readily, of matters beyond my time and knowledge, as though he spoke with another man and that man a friend. Often as I quoted Porphyryion he would smile in regret—'I should have wished to know him, Kalypso.' Thoughtful for my smallest want, as that uncle had been, he was no more. Unpractised in the woman's arts that my sisters learned with their first baby steps, I longed now for knowledge so lately despised, for surely even this man, unpassionate, just and kindly as a god, must love some woman. And indeed, when the long galley came, too soon, I thought she

had found him out, for before the legionaries and the merchants a lady walked stately up the white steps, considering between a frown and a smile the reed huts of our fisher-folk and the empty hills beyond. Æmilius greeted her more in surprise than pleasure, I thought, yet how could any man refuse this lady homage, and I, caught unawares by such an apparition, stood foolishly enough beside him.

'How delightful a retreat, Æmilius, but how barbaric.' And although she had affected not to notice me, the sidelong lift of her lids included me in that 'barbaric.' 'Send the slave away,' she said carelessly. 'I have much to tell you, Æmilius.'

'Kalypso is freeborn as yourself, Julia,' he answered, lightly too, yet at the dryness of his tone her brows lifted again, charmingly. Young enough for loveliness, not too young for subtlety, she was plainly a great lady besides, cruel, haughty and corrupt no doubt, as I had heard these Roman beauties were, but outwardly a woman most perfect in gesture, voice, speech, dressed too with a quiet magnificence unfamiliar to me. She spoke lightly of this and that in Rome, and presently, seeing Æmilius absorbed, I slipped away and hid in the garden.

Under a thicket of wild rose I lay full length and the day passed over me brilliant as a painted amulet out of Egypt. I heard calling, steps searched the garden, but my retreat was so close, through the fretted leaves the sun hardly warmed my hair.

To this untended corner we came so seldom that I woke from the heavy after-forgetfulness of weeping, astonished to hear their voices. Up and down they paced under the lapis-blue evening, never so distant that I could not hear every word.

'I tell you, Æmilius, this tyrant will not see another birthday. There is a stronger hand ready to grasp the tiller. The ship of Empire drifts strangely wide of the course you set for her, ah, nobly, and those were noble days. Have you forgotten?'

'I remember what makes me content with this retreat. So little love there was between us then, Julia, it cannot now have driven you into my wilderness.'

'May I not have learned wisdom—and humility, Æmilius?'

'You are pride's very incarnation.'

'And you,' her voice swelled, 'proud as Olympus, who suffered Domitian to shrug you into exile rather than abandon your least conviction, will you tell me you have forgiven also? Listen, for this mockery put upon you by your friend and Emperor, your

sovereignty over half a hundred savages, is more real than is his dominion to-day.'

'Who is the strong man who will wrest it from him, Julia?'

'Do you not know better than I? Saturninus, the dictator of Germania.'

'Now, I have never liked that butcher,' said Æmilius thoughtfully.

'What does it signify what tales are whispered of his birth? He holds the army solidly, the distant provinces have revolted and the legions sent to put them down drink to Domitian's fall in the country wine. Rome, remembering ancient cruelties, fears only till Saturninus shall fire her courage with his return. He is marching from Germania, he will enter the city not merely as a conqueror, but as the chosen chief of Empire.'

'You are so deep in his counsels, Julia? What have I, a peaceful country gentleman, to do with these great happenings?'

'This is the hour of your return to greatness,' she urged, seeing that directness must serve her. 'Antonius Saturninus sends you greetings, knowing your worth, as who in Rome does not, knowing what we lose by your absence, he bids you return to your place at the Emperor's right hand. You sail with me to-night, Æmilius, to welcome the conqueror in the name of all Rome, whose idol you are still.'

'Nay, if Antonius's triumph be indeed sure as sunrise, he hardly needs my greeting to make it secure. How will you tempt me that I should blindfold my honour to this brute, honour that was stronger than love for Domitian, than any interest that could whisper: "Compromise, cheat, lie, but stay in Rome for the common good." Shall my pride, that has held me here seven years, spur me to rush upon the man I served, to strike him when others have flung him to the ground already?'

'You will not come to Rome with me?'

'I will never return to Rome. Tell those who sent you that here Domitian is Emperor and shall remain so while I have a man alive to prove it.'

'Oh, you talk finely, Æmilius, you so high above reasonable human hates and loves, what teaches you such content with your poor lot? Have you turned hermit truly, the better to savour solitude, or is a sweeter consolation hidden here? Your child of Nature fits well into the picture; is she one of many, does this sea-walled garden enclose more pampered blooms?'

'None of your spite, Julia. The child came to me out of the blue, and will depart on the wings of her fancy, with my good wishes. She is not of your breed.'

'Child? A woman grown, and woman to the finger-tips. Have you no wit to read such eyes? They languish for you, 'twas plain at my first glimpse of her. She is yours for the taking.'

'My little Greek girl? She is a dear innocent, if indeed she loves me, 'tis as another Porphyryion, and I love her for it. Come, Julia, you must be in haste to return to Rome and the great events that are promised there.'

When I heard his voice again, calling me up and down the glades, I dragged myself from the bushes and went to him. This night I was to see triumphant in him the grief and weariness so resolutely subdued till now.

'Is this my doing?' He spoke half to himself, aghast at my face sullen with tears, my dress all stained from the earth.

'She is gone?' I questioned bitterly.

He pointed seaward. The galley's lights lessened as we gazed, the moon caught the spread of sail bannered against the darkness, dwindling into the sheen of moonlit water.

'Why will you not return to your own country?' I asked.

'Where have you been since morning?'

'In the rose-wilderness. I heard all your talk, I could not help it. She is a bad woman, I know she does not wish you well, but do you not desire to see your own place again?'

He drew me with him towards the house; sitting before it in the blanched moonlight, I could have wept for his stare of fixed sadness.

'We were schoolfellows, Domitian and I, comrades, thinking the same thought, ardent for the same ends, for he wished peace and plenty, he had it in him to rule justly. I loved him greatly, did he so love me? Sometimes I do think so, but others came between us. Men called me good, mocking me with the word, yet had Domitian followed my counsel he would not now be hateful, his life in danger and his empire forfeit.'

'You loved him,' I cried, 'and served him to your own undoing. Ungrateful master, why should you wish him well?'

'Such is the way of kings, Kalypso, let it be. Here I have found content amongst books and crops, here I could spend my life learning that the gods have better things to give than power. But I may not dream in peace, there is mighty trouble threaten-



ing. I have other news than Julia's. She owes me a grudge ; for all her fair words, I think she may be glad to pay it. While I yet have the power, I must send you to safety. My friends in Byzantium are not forgetful, for my sake and your own you will be welcome. May you be fortunate, little one.'

'And you?'

'This is my post. Here I must stay and my men with me, since being Romans they know no better than to obey orders.'

'But you are warned, there is still time to outwit danger by flight. You will not stay?'

'Where should we go, Kalypso, outcast, outlawed? Since we will not owe our lives to treachery, we must die for loyalty. It is little loss—Saturninus will prove a harder master than Domitian.'

'Then I stay too, Æmilius.'

'You shall go to-morrow.'

'I will not.' I knelt at his feet—where else should my place be? 'It is true that I am no child, true that I do love you ; if that be shame, I must bear it, but you see that I cannot leave you.'

'My little one, death is the portion of us who stay. You, free as we are not, with all life before you, need not regard our sacrifice, which is, I grant, more foolish than heroic. Our very love must bid you go.'

'I will not go.' I pressed upon him, I kissed his hands. 'Dear one, suffer me, for all my heart is here with you and finds no rest elsewhere ; since sorrow and misfortune threaten my lord, may I not comfort him against ill-fate so long as the gods allow?'

'Nay, Kalypso, it is wrong, hateful wrong, that you should woo me—you so beautiful, so lovable. That you should add the sacrifice of your unfulfilled days to the barren holocaust of mine ; how shall I allow it in honour?'

'You are too dear for me to find happiness without you. We could escape this death, yet if you must stay there is no other good for me than to die with you. Ah, but we could be happy yet a little while together, Æmilius.'

He lifted me up, his face against my unbound hair, and I think we wept, till the touch of each other comforted our hearts.

O days of enchantment that we shared in love, sky and earth and sea most gracious to speed our passing. Sixty, seventy days

I counted, and at the end of each I flung a white jewel into the sea, in propitiation of the Fates that might still forget us in this dear desolate spot. That they should not forget, a woman remembered; on the seventy-first day a sail clove the disk of the setting sun, by moonrise three galleys lay beyond the harbour, darkening the sea.

The fisher-folk and our few shepherds needed no harsher warning. Our forty legionaries, considering from their loopholes the force they must oppose, with no hope of triumphing, said little and sharpened their lance-points.

'My friends,'—Æmilius stood amongst them—'you see that we are to be butchered, I fear to little purpose. Who commands yonder does not propose to waste men, he will lie at the harbour-mouth till morning and land at his leisure. The night is moonless; from the eastward beach our peasants are, I think, setting sail even now. You have given me long service and faithful, worthy of better reward than purposeless destruction. It is for my sake that the galleys of Saturninus trouble the bay. If any amongst you would find place in the galleys, or in the fishing boats of our islanders, let them go quickly, without thought of dishonour, and my blessing go with them.'

A whisper amongst the forty; many had served under Æmilius in Iberia, some were from his own estates, born and reared in the shadow of his name. The common voice of these men, hardly more than a murmur, answered him by the mouth of his own freedman, Varro.

'We do not wish to desert our duty and thee, Æmilius.'

He saluted them, his face keenly proud as I had never yet known it. I would hardly leave his side; together we made the rounds that hushed night.

At daybreak the galleys crept up, till we might count the shields lining the decks. From the fort along the colonnade there was deep water, below the temple only they might wade ashore, so they stood in to make fast at the quay wall.

'If we barricade the tower they will hardly trouble to storm it, knowing we must surrender to hunger if not to them. The tide sweeps them upon us, the wind is in their favour. What do you say, Varro?'

'I would sooner die in the open air, my lord.'

So we awaited them, I watching from the house the mad play of light on spear-shaft and sword between the ships and the stone

landing-place. For two hours we thrust them back, then, with a great shout they leapt ashore, forcing us back to the blue-tiled villa.

Seventeen men of our forty reached the forecourt, *Æmilius* amongst them, and all day we held the house, for the Empire had no wish to encounter us with fierce squandering of courage. Slowly we withdrew from room to room, by doorway and pillar, borne down by weight of numbers, and the sun sank redly upon a tomb, for man could call it home no longer.

We waited, my love and I, behind our last defences, but even now these men were in no haste; quietly, ominously, they withdrew from the shattered villa and their camp-fires flickered in the garden. 'It is not their intention that we should die, we live to adorn a triumph.' My lord lifted me to a niche high in the wall, through which we climbed to the colonnade, following its shadow to the temple of *Artemis* and a narrow locked gate that barred it from attack.

'They will not trouble to batter that down, *Kalypso*, they will come at us from the beach, and not till morning.' He spread his cloak on the blue tiles before the image of the goddess; long hours we lay, weary indeed and faint, yet grudging slumber that shortened love. I did sleep at last, for his touch woke me in the pearly dawn, the sea-wind came freshly to us on the temple wall.

'Our last loving-cup; drink, *Kalypso*,' and darkly the wine glowed as we drank. Such a fair day was dawning, we laughed for joy of it, and still more to watch through the disorder of our garden, the soldiery creeping in upon our house.

'They have seen us, *Æmilius*; look, they are making for the beach.' He locked his arms about me, we took our last kiss. Below amongst the rocks, voices called, feet stumbled. The sun, not yet risen, melted all the pearl to blueness, the wind vibrant as a harpstring sang about us.

I drew my love's sword from its sheath, laid his hand upon the hilt, felt horror shake him: 'O Gods, what is this I must do?' But I lifted the steel, set the point against the hollow of my throat, and the sun was on us, even as the first helmeted head rose cautiously from the rocks.

Blue water leaps under the sea-wind. The blue tiles shake beneath us—why is my love's arm withdrawn? I lie couched on softness, the warmth of his cloak, that pillowed our last night of love. . . . The wind is a ringing harpstring. . . . I stare upward . . . the deep-blue throbbing sky . . . blue. . . .

## THE LOST SONG.

BY MAJOR A. E. W. SALT.

IN the summer of 1909 I was living in Vancouver, British Columbia, looking for a holiday.

Teaching is strenuous work at the best. Teaching a class of Canadian boys and girls in a university college calls for all one's patience and tact and brain—and I was very tired. Moreover, I knew I was tired. Luckily, I had abundant choice of holiday, and the expense of the kind of holiday I wanted—fishing, canoeing, camping out was a trifle in those far-off, pre-war days. I had many friends who wanted me to go camping with them—Canada is a land of hospitality—at Saanich, on the North Arm, along the shores of Howe Sound. How the names rush back into memory as I write! And yet I wavered and made no decision, until at last came an invitation I could not refuse. I was asked not only to go up to Alert Bay—an Indian reserve 300 miles up the coast—and stay as long as I liked with the agent, but to go there in a revenue cutter, skippered by an old sailor of the name of Walters, who knew every cove and inlet of that marvellous coast and had an uncanny genius for understanding and interpreting those wayward children of Nature, the Siwash Indians of British Columbia. Furthermore, the great attraction of the visit was to be a 'potlatch'—the spring celebration of the Siwash after his long winter of trapping and hunting and trekking on ski and snowshoe and dog sledge across the uncharted and untameable northland. The 'potlatch' is a revel of dancing and singing and eating and merriment. No wonder that I said 'Yes' and made ready.

I am not going to take up time in describing the voyage to Alert Bay, though in the cærulean intensity of their colour, in their majestic surrounding of mountain and glacier and forest and scree the fiords of Canada are infinitely more splendid than any Hardanger. Nor am I going to expatiate on the menu, though smoked salmon has its qualities, oolachan is as good as the best smelt or whitebait of old Greenwich and a cast of Pelee from the Niagara Peninsula is a worthy rival to Liebfraumlich or Nebbiolo Spumarte.

We reached Alert Bay on the first night of the 'potlatch.'

The reserve was full of Siwash—men, women, children, babies strapped on their mothers' backs—and they kept on coming, over the hills and down the trail from the 'back of beyond' in a seemingly endless, chattering, laughing stream to pitch their birch-bark tepees and light their fires. Those who suffered from border raids in the days of Kit Carson and Deadwood Dick may have cried in the agony of massacre, 'The only good Indian is a dead Indian,' but that is not the belief of British Columbia and, away from the railroad track, where he is a sorry, disgruntled, dishevelled creature, the Red Indian retains much of his nobility and has much of the charm and dignity of an ancient race. That night we saw him at his best and could realise the attraction that has made the possession of Indian blood an honour among the wisest and best of Canada.

Physically, it was a never-to-be-forgotten night. In the cold transparency of spring, no stars are brighter than those of northern Canada, and to me the great firs—tamarac and spruce and pine and larch—silhouetted against the sky, the constant movement of half-seen mystic figures, the murmurous rustle of the wind were the epitome of peace. I was in the mood to be affected by an acute external stimulus and so, as I rested, very content against the bole of a forest giant, it did not seem surprising that there should come to my ears the recurrent notes—now piano, now forte, now long-drawn-out, now with the rapidity of a quick-step—of a haunting, strangely familiar tune, familiar even to me whose musical knowledge was of the earth, earthy, and who certainly did not include in my repertoire the tribal song of the Siwash Indian.

I racked my brains, I conjured up all my experience of song and melody and yet I could not find the clue. At last I turned to Walters in despair. Even before I spoke, he countered, 'I cannot tell, and yet' . . . and then to Bryant: 'Where, what, who?' 'No one knows. At every "potlatch" they sing the same old song. It's Siwash and yet—it isn't Siwash. The accent is Siwash, the lilt is Siwash, but the words are not Siwash. Russian, perhaps, of the Bering—maybe, a Spanish sea-lingo—possibly a native dialect of Aklavik, of the Babines, of the Aleuts. *Quien sabe?* Certainly, not I. I never met anyone who did know. And there is one odd thing, it's a song of the women. Never before have I known a song of the women only, but this is handed down from woman to woman. It's the funniest sidelight on matriarchy I have ever run across, but there it is.'



This was Walters's chance. In outward appearance a typical weather-beaten old sailor, in mind he was clipper-cut. His silence during Bryant's meanderings showed that his keen brain was at work and so at last: 'Who's your oldest squaw? Let me talk to her.' Bryant looked across an open space to where, in the shadow of a great tamarac, lay a brown wisp of humanity, alive only in the waving tips of her scraggy fingers and toes. 'Ish-Ko-Mish, daughter of Running Water,' he said. 'Aged—I have no idea—possible a hundred, possibly more. Has been in the neighbourhood ever since I was a boy, and I am sixty this fall. I believe she remembers my father first coming to Campbell Inlet and that was in 1826. Carry her over. Say one of the Palefaces from the "Great Island" wishes to speak with her.' They brought the bundle over. The fingers and toes stopped waving and only in the eyes of the old crone could you detect a spark of life. And then, as Walters talked to her in her own tongue, life gradually flickered up into her eyes, until at last she woke and began to croon, like a witch, the strange, familiar tune. At first the notes came slowly, but, after a while, her cracked old voice seemed to blot out the noise around and start a flood of memory which overwhelmed us all in its spate. I shall never know whether we whistled or hummed or sang. All I know is that, after a medley of noise, we suddenly leapt to our feet, each with his own favourite interjection, followed by a shout of amazement, of bewildered astonishment. For the lost tune, the lost song, the song of the Siwash of Alert Bay, three hundred miles from the railway, was not a song of fiord and glacier and pine forest, but a song of our own—a song of the 'home' of Bryant and Walters and myself, of the 'home' that Bryant had never seen, of the 'home' that Walters had not seen for forty years, of the 'home' that I, the tenderfoot, had left seven years before. It was disguised indeed, it was masked with strange words, but there was no shadow of doubt about it. Over and over again did we listen to the same refrain:

'Oh, dear! what can the matter be?

Oh, dear! what can the matter be?

Johnny's not home from the fair.

He promised to buy me a pretty blue ribbon

To tie up my bonny, brown hair.'

But the end is not yet. To me, as a professed student of history, fell the task of documentation. Right willingly did I under-

take it. First of all, I must find out who composed the ballad, and the tune, and when it was written. So, after some thinking, I wrote to Dr. Bridge, organist of Westminster Abbey, as the uncle of an old school friend, with my query. Though greatly interested, he could not himself help, but he sent my letter to Cecil Sharp. Cecil Sharp, as most people now know, was responsible for the revival of English folk song and dance, and collected folk songs and dances not only from his own country, but from the highlands of Virginia, where the 'poor white trash' may be the descendants of Raleigh's early colonists, the first English stock that ever settled overseas. In the course I heard from Cecil Sharp. The ballad and the tune were both of the end of the eighteenth century—the ballad, the tune of the year—the 'Tipperary' or 'Daisy Bell' or 'Pat on the Back' or 'Tiptoe through the Tulips'—sung in every coffee-house, played on every flute, the stock-in-trade of every chapman. The author is unknown. It was first printed in a book in a *Book of Collected Ballads*, which can be seen in the British Museum, and it was first sung in 1790.

Now let us link it up with the west coast of British Columbia. In February, 1791, a year after 'Oh dear, what can the matter be!' won popular fame, Captain George Vancouver, R.N., left Falmouth Harbour in the brig *Discovery*, accompanied by the tender *Chatham*, under Lieutenant Herbert. Vancouver returned to England in October, 1794, after three years of considerable achievement.

He had charted 'Dusky Bay' in New Zealand and, for Cook's remark, 'Nobody knows what,' had written on his own chart 'Somebody knows what.' He had discovered the Chatham group in the South Pacific. He had declared the Hawaiian Islands a British possession. He had accurately delineated the coast-line of North America from 'Drakes Bay,' just north of San Francisco to Bering Strait. He had sailed round the 'Great Island' that bears his name and had discovered the Gulf of Georgia (unaccountably, he did not notice the mouth of the Fraser River, whose muddied waters stain the Strait for two miles from the shore). He had accepted the formal apology of the Spaniards for the arrest and imprisonment of John Mears, and then, at last, he had sailed, in the autumn of 1793, into the waters of Alert Bay. Shall I finish the tale, or shall I leave it to the reader's imagination? A ship slowly gliding over the placid waters of the fiord; a party of lads off a boat on shore—for firewood, quail, salmon, deer—a band

of hunting, trapping, Indians—a young squaw—a look—a meeting in the pine forest—memories of flogging and weevilly biscuits and salt junk and the bilboes—one ‘squawman’ who never came back when the ship departed in the morning—and the English ballad is the song of a Siwash tribe.

Just a story, an experience—and yet, perhaps, a little more. There is Kipling’s ‘Namgay Doolah,’ and there have been many others. The deserter from the *Discovery* added something not only to the musical tradition of the North American Indians, but to the leaven of British influence which permeates the world often through most unexpected channels. After all, the strength of the Empire lies not in its conscious creation by authority, but in the casual, seemingly purposeless effort of men and women of British stock who have adventured overseas and sown their grains of mustard seed in strange and barren lands.

### JACARANDA TREE.

Most precious in this land to me  
There stands a jacaranda tree ;  
Along the burning road I go,  
Where piercing rays my eyes beset,  
And soon the distance is aglow  
With softened flames of violet.

Above, on branches straying wide  
I see the gorgeous lanterns ride,  
While here below are gleaming showers  
Fallen, as lazy branches stir,  
And all the way is paved with flowers,  
As for a royal traveller.

And though, now, in another clime  
May come the joy of Lilac Time,  
And others may be gathering  
The purple that was dear to me,  
Here each returning dawn will bring  
My precious jacaranda tree.

C. MANSEL REECE.

Uganda.

## BIRDS ON AN ESTANCIA IN URUGUAY.

BY IANTHE DUNBAR.

THE lily pond in the garden of my *estancia* in Uruguay is a meeting-place for all the small birds round the house, who love to perch on the fountain and preen their feathers, pausing now and again to take a delicate sip.

In summer nothing stirs whilst siesta lasts, but as the afternoon wears on they gather there in twos and threes.

The Pigmy Dove, in demure grey, leaves her nest in the pergola and comes to cool her throat, running along the gravel like a clock-work toy on her pink feet. Her nest made of dry grass and lined with a few feathers is amongst the vine leaves, and from this secret outlook she watches the come and go of *estancia* life, the saddled horses stamping at the flies, or Alfredo, the gardener, passing below with his watering-can. She seeks the protection of human beings, as do the humming-birds who sling their fairy nest near the house.

Like so many of our birds they too are migratory, arriving in September (which is spring in Uruguay) with the orange-blossom and the white tassels of the acacia, and leaving in April when the days get colder. Our usual humming-bird is three inches long, his plumage iridescent green and bronze, and the feathers so close and overlapped that they are like mail. Even a thunderstorm does not ruffle them, and before the rain is over he hovers busily over the drenched flowers. At any moment in fine weather there is a sudden chirp and whirr and he appears out of nowhere, whisking from the flowers in the verandah to the roses in the garden, then off over the house-top and back again in a few minutes.

December is high summer in South America, and the flame-coloured creeper in the verandah is covered with huge sprays of trumpet-shaped flowers. All day long the humming-birds dart and poise amongst them, and the lower petals are pin-pricked with their tiny claws where they half-perch, their wings still a-whirr, darting their beaks into each cup in turn. Two adult birds and two young are constantly there, but the elder male hardly tolerates

the presence of his son, chasing him away with shrill cries. The young birds get dusty with pollen about the head when feeding whilst their parents remain spick and span.

The hen is less bravely feathered than her mate; her beak is not orange like his, and her breast is grey. She alone seemed to build the nest, which was fashioned cunningly of thistledown and cobwebs, and of a size to fit comfortably on a thumb. It was woven to the dry branch of a monkey-puzzle tree, about five feet from the ground, and as it grew she paddled it into shape with her breast. When finished, she ornamented the outside with fragments of green leaves and bark, making these adhere with cobwebs from the crevices of tree-trunks. Since the leaves were useless for camouflage, were they added for adornment? I went away after she laid two eggs the size of peas, and only returned when the nestlings were almost fledged, sitting gravely side by side, ridiculously like an ornamental lid to the nest, with their long beaks as a handle.

W. H. Hudson says there is more of the dragon-fly than of the bird about this species, and this is very true. It is apparent in his darting flight and the indifference he shows to man. He hovers within a few feet of a human being without fear. The flight is so swift that it is as impossible to follow far with the eye as that of a bumble-bee, and it is amazing that such a scrap can migrate safely north.

There is very little colour in this land. The pasture, green for a short space in spring and dusted then with flowers, quickly parches to a dreary dun stretching for leagues and leagues in a rolling expanse till it meets the sky. Trees are few. They are planted about *estancia* houses or in an occasional *monte* intended as shelter for cattle, but beyond these there is only the scrub along the rivers. In this aridity the eye notes with pleasure the pure snow-white of the little Widow Bird with her narrow edgings of black, or the poppy-scarlet of that other flycatcher, the Fire King, as he hawks for insects on the wing. His cousin, the Scissortail hawks, flies too, as incommoded by his long tail feathers as a modern debutante with a court train.

None of the last three mentioned come to the fountain; they are of the orchard or farther afield. Bolder is a fruit-eater, incorrectly called the *siete colore* or seven-coloured, whose real name I do not know. He is brilliant as a flunkey in powder-blue and orange, and as soon as the first fruit ripens he appears, his natural



timidity forgotten in his passion for loquats and mulberries. He is only with us for a short time and then disappears.

The 'Vente Veo,' so named from his harsh cry, a handsome shrike with lemon breast and cruel beak, scatters all other birds when he comes for a dip. He is very common in this country, a freebooter who swallows grapes like pills and does not hesitate to poach a goldfish on the sly; but a greater miscreant in this latter respect is the big grey and russet Kingfisher with his white collar, who comes up from the river for his early breakfast whilst the world still sleeps.

The *estancia* house and grounds are a moored raft of green on the wide khaki-coloured expanse, and since bird-life is protected round it they increase, feeding in winter on the black berries of the privet and sheltered from the cold by thick hedges and shrubs. The search for food brings shyer birds about the place in cold weather, amongst them the so-called 'blue cardinal,' who usually frequents the low trees along the river, not a cardinal at all but a bird about the same size, in colour slate and powder-blue, the cock brighter in colour than the hen, with a scanty crest of scarlet and white.

On a stormy winter night birds are blown, dazed and terrified, into the lit verandah and sometimes a basketful of small half-frozen doves is picked up and sheltered till morning.

In spring all these dangers are forgotten and the happy birds go about their love-making and nest-building with no thought of inevitable morrows. Swifts and martins circling about the *patios* remind us of English homesteads. Long-tailed small green parrots, crossbow-shaped in flight, go screaming overhead but are too wild to come to the garden, except for a predatory raid. They live two miles away at the Old Quinta (orchard), where their untidy nests, each a tenement, litter the eucalyptus trees. As a rider passes below, the chattering and shrieking rivals that of an alley in the poorer parts of Naples, and from every doorway of the nest pokes a small green head.

The dignitaries of the Old Quinta are a couple of large Horned Owls, who have lived there for years, nesting in the hollow of an old tree. With their long, pointed ears and fluffy outline they look almost like a pair of cats peering down from a high branch. Put to flight they lumber awkwardly to a deeper patch of shade. They are the 'Terror that Travels by Night,' as many an incautious young parrot must have learnt to his cost.

The owls permit themselves a family of two each year. These inherit the owl gravity and sit solemnly by their parents, quite understanding that it is not the thing to play with ragged parrots from the slums. As soon as they have grown adult plumage the old birds chase them away and resume their Darby and Joan existence.

Their very small relations, the Burrowing Owls, are plentiful in the open 'camp,' nesting in holes made by skunks or armadillos. They sit side by side in affectionate fashion at the mouth of their burrows, staring at the world through round spectacles and giving an old-fashioned bob like village schoolchildren, before turning and scuttling below. Without moving, they can turn their heads to follow a passing object till they seem to look down their own backs; hence the 'gaucho' joke that by riding round and round a small owl he finally screws his own head off.

A pair of grey Fish Eagles sometimes pass over the Big Quinta, but they are of a wider horizon and their long swooping flight brings them from the river, where are found three varieties of heron and a few black cranes and divers, whilst snipe drum in the marshes where the wild duck nest, or an occasional stork stands meditatively on one leg. Very rarely one may see a Rosy Flamingo, a stray from some flight of passers-by. Small tit-like birds creep amongst the rushes and the handsome Reed Bird with his yellow front chatters cheerfully with his friends. Here too are found the red-billed Ground Finches.

Water is an irresistible attraction in a country like this. A traveller through the aching expanse, with the sun beating pitilessly upon his head, comes thankfully upon a clear stream running between green banks or sliding over boulders. Down by the river weeping willows make a pleasant shade, and tussocks of tall grass shelter the shy Water Rails, whose cackling call awakes the sleepy *estanciero* in winter dawns. There are two varieties. It is a game of hide-and-seek to flush one of these birds amongst the tussocks; his ventriloquist cry seems to come from under the very feet, but the pink and grey bird is by then a hundred yards off, running like a lamplighter. He dodges from clump to clump on his stilt-like, rose-coloured legs, carrying his absurd black tail spread like a small fan. When forced into the open he rises from the ground in bungling fashion.

It is marvellous that any species nesting in the open should increase, so surrounded are they by enemies of every kind. The

South American partridge, the Tinamou, crouches so close to the ground that she only gets up with a sudden clatter when a foot is almost on her, and she is easily snared with a noose by a man on horseback. It must be seldom indeed that she hatches out her clutch of beautiful wine-coloured eggs safely. The Spurred Plover are certainly fewer in number than they were, though their shrill cry of 'terra terra'—whence their nickname—is still one of the most typical of 'camp' sounds.

A bird of the open, too, is the scarlet-breasted Starling, who congregates in flocks like his English cousin, the colour of his breast that of the vivid little verbena which lights the dreary waste with sudden beauty.

It is interesting to note by what shifts the different varieties protect themselves. The noisy Oven Bird, about the size of an ordinary thrush, self-constituted policeman of the bird-world, has a large dome-like mud nest as big as a man's head, built on a fence-post, gate, or any exposed place, from whence he shrieks defiance to an enemy or greetings to a friend. His fondness for telephone posts is inconvenient, since he wedges his nest in the wires so that a peon is sent round periodically to knock down the nests. The birds then rebuild them with exasperating perseverance. They are ingeniously planned, with an interior wall at right angles round which entry must be made, something after old border-castle fashion. The owner is safe thus from snakes and other enemies, though he cannot defend himself from the cuckoo-visits of the Cowbirds, who distribute their casual eggs amongst all the respectable households about. These glossy black birds and their brown mates lead a raffish and disreputable life and have even improved on the ordinary cuckoo's technique, since they peck a hole in each legitimate egg so that only their own rascally offspring may survive. The Guayra cuckoo, colloquially called a jacky bird, if he ever had these habits, is now a reformed character. But I do not like him, and his ragged crest and dirty yellow untidy plumage make him look disreputable. Unlike the Cowbirds, he has a nest of his own, and lovely pale-blue eggs, mottled with thick white markings which wear off in time.

Another method of protective nest-building is that of the Stick Bird, an unobtrusive slender little brown bird who makes an enormous nest of sticks in a bush or tree, with a tunnel lined with wool, leading to the nursery. Every thorn tree in the camp holds one or more of these strange nests, whilst the birds, with the pertinacity

of Burmese pilgrims to a shrine, add a twig to the sacred pile whenever they visit it. Since both the 'Oven Bird' and the 'Stick Bird' are very abundant, evidently their tactics are successful.

Slowly, very slowly, the wild animal and bird-life of Uruguay is changing, and the four-footed small inhabitants of the wild decrease in number every year; hunted down by dogs, trapped by peons for the dollar or two their skins may fetch, slaughtered because they are 'vermin' or for the mere wanton love of killing.

Agriculture has brought in, or anyway encouraged, various birds such as the medium-sized pigeon and the orange-headed yellow sparrow who flock in the grain fields. The Martinetta, a large partridge, has been introduced and increases slowly; but on the other hand, fencing and persecution are diminishing the number of South American ostrich or Rhea, who used to be far more plentiful. He is still, however, a familiar object, stalking about surrounded by his harem or running like the wind before the honk of a motor-horn. He is a much smaller bird than the South African variety and brownish-grey in colour, whilst his feathers are only used for the humble purpose of making feather brooms and the sinews of his neck for the manufacture of ingenious watch-chains.

His is a curious *ménage*. The cock bird undertakes all domestic cares and it is he who looks after the nest, which is just a slight hollow in the ground, and the huge butter-coloured eggs laid by his various wives. He guards them well, and if a rider comes too near, he will charge furiously with lowered snake-like neck and fluffed-out feathers, making even a quiet horse shy violently.

The young ostrich is able to run about and feed as soon as he is hatched, and at first has no fear of man. I have picked up an ostrich chick and held it like a bouquet by its long legs whilst it looked about quite happily. The old cock is often to be seen strutting out with his family, his long neck and absurd head showing against the sky, surrounded by the diminutive silhouettes of his brood, looking like a row of exclamation marks. He makes off at a terrific pace at the first sign of danger, his wives and children streaming after him, and it is practically impossible to run them down. When they come to a fence they hurl themselves through or over it with a reckless display of white petticoats, for all the world like old-fashioned spinsters pursued by a bull. Young ostriches are easily tamed, but are apt to become a nuisance about the house.

There are undoubtedly more varieties of birds about my *estancia* than there used to be. Strangers arrive from time to time and stay, finding life here pleasant, for the old adage: 'If you want birds, plant trees,' proves true as ever.

Two years ago we acquired a new woodpecker, cinnamon-coloured and with an enormous beak like a scimitar which is used as much to extract grubs from the ground as from the bark of trees. The Green Woodpecker with his loud chuckle and a 'camp' variety with a scarlet topknot and painted white round the eye in clown-fashion were here already, but their beaks are insignificant compared to his or to that of his small shy understudy, who keeps chiefly to the shelter of trees.

I do not know the correct names of our new woodpecker, nor do I know that of a charming little migrant, a kind of small finch who nested two seasons in succession in the verandah, building a fragile cup in a spray of asparagus-fern.

Hudson's *Birds of La Plata* was written of those in the Argentine, and many birds mentioned in its pages are not found here, whilst there are several here that he does not mention.

It is strange how few people in this country are interested in bird-lore or can name a bird correctly. They have their favourites, such as the friendly mocking-bird with his melodious voice, or the busy little house wren searching the window-sill for flies; they keep a cardinal or a South American thrush with his wild heart in a cage and tell you they 'love birds.' But they know nothing of bird-life in general. Even with an understanding love of them it is difficult to learn much.

The bird-world is a kingdom to itself, and each member of it, from the ostrich to the tiny humming-bird, fulfils the laws of that kingdom. They live apart, eternally alien, answering to the call of instincts we do not know, stirred by fears we cannot understand. They migrate and we do not know their signal for departure, whither they go or by what route. We accept their reappearance in the same matter-of-fact fashion. We know of their birth, but little of their death, and of the months or years between—what? Singing in our trees, searching for food in our gardens, nesting under our very eyes, they cheat us to an impression of intimacy which does not exist.

But what delightful moments they give us! It is always a pleasure to come across the Meadow Pipit's modest nest in a tuft of grass, or as daylight fails to put up the mysterious Nightjars



with their silent flight. 'Dormilones,' Sleepy Fellows, they call them here, and they appear in such numbers when fireflies spangle the dusk, that one wonders how they can remain hidden by day. We have two kinds, the larger one giving an effect of white, grey and black as he swoops noiselessly overhead, whilst the smaller and rarer kind is leaf-brown.

I put up one of the larger variety early one summer morning, when he flew a short distance in confused fashion and pitched on the ground ahead of me with outspread wings. He let me come near enough to mark his soft ash-brown plumage, the white band across the wings and the round hawk-like head, then he rose again, repeating the manoeuvre several times, till he suddenly took wing and sailed off with perfect ease, having successfully drawn me away from the neighbourhood of his nest.

Though not a scientific observer, I have noted seventy-eight different kinds of birds on my property alone, several of which are varieties of one species. Thus there are four kinds of pigeon, three or four varieties of hawks, three different owls, three herons, three kingfishers, etc., but it is the 'stray' or the very rare specimen which makes a red-letter day. Once I picked up a beautifully coloured, small dead bird on a bitter day in winter. He was a stranger; and yellow, orange, swallow-blue and green mingled in the little heap of ruffled feathers on the bare ground.

Once only did I see the small Red Heron, about twelve inches tall, subsequently recognised from Hudson's description of him. It was in spring. He flew low over the ground and landed in dry grass beyond my car, and had my eye not been on him all the time I could not have spotted him where he stood. His striped plumage toned exactly with the yellow grass and even within a few feet of him my companion's keen eyes could not detect him. We moved closer and he flew into the lower branches of a eucalyptus and disappeared completely. We searched, but to no avail. It was not till I read Hudson's account of this extraordinary bird that I realised he had probably been within a hand's-breadth the whole time.

He uses camouflage to conceal himself. In Hudson's account, he even held his head with beak upright, the better to blend with the reeds amongst which he stood. Caught by the naturalist and then released, he flew a few yards off and again became invisible. Hudson marked his landing and kept his eye on the very clump he was in, but yet it took that acute observer some time to find him again.

There are not many real songsters amongst the birds of Uruguay, though several have pleasing notes. The best singer is the 'Sur-saal' or South American Thrush, the size of the English one, with a beautifully clear and flute-like song. His back and head are slate-grey, the throat and breast light biscuit in tone merging to a bright chestnut below, whilst the eye has a vivid orange rim. His gift of lovely song is his undoing, poor bird, and often and often he breaks his heart in captivity in some dark *patio* far from the leafy solitudes he loves.

The other singer, the 'callandria' or Mocking Bird, is friendly and most companionable. He sings anywhere and everywhere, and his trills, clear ringing notes and jug-jugs recall the English nightingale. He is a mimic too, and imitates the song of other birds. The debonair Grey Cardinal, with his scarlet cap, has a sweet fluty call which can hardly be called a song, though very pleasant to the ear. The rarer and shy Yellow Cardinal has an even sweeter stave. It is a lovely sight to see him, burnished as a weathercock, perched on the very top of a fir tree, his brilliant yellow body showing up against the sky whilst he sings his liquid phrases over and over again.

Apart from these skilled performers we have few real singers. The Chingola, South American sparrow, has a plaintive little song, and there is the Siakin with his sweet thread-like rill of melody, also the Wren with the usual sudden outpouring astonishing in so small a bird. But beyond these I cannot recall any real songster, though the garden in spring and early summer is full of pleasant sounds, such as the hollow 'coo-roo-coo' of the large pigeon and the twitterings of smaller birds.

The Reed Bird chatters musically by the stream, or as he flies with his companions overhead, whilst the Red-breasted Starling murmurs and whistles to himself as he busily quarters the ground for food.

In spring the garden is so full of sound that it is difficult to disentangle its various components. What with soft trillings and chirpings and sudden calls, it seems the very air is vocal. It is as if the sunshine and the gentle rain and the stir of growing leaves take voice, making a web of delicate music which steals into the consciousness till we are hardly aware of its presence. It is only when it ceases suddenly on approach of a storm that we realise, perhaps, how large a part the sound of bird-life plays in the pleasure a garden gives.

## A BALLADE OF SUPERSTITIONS.

'GREEN's unlucky,' quoth Moll Magrew,  
 'Vert your face from the hell-cat's eye!  
 Stuff your borders with sage and rue!  
 Spill no salt, or your granny will die!  
 Curtsey thrice if a sweep goes by!  
 Opals! *Not for a wedding,*' she'd say.  
 Then, with a sidelong look at the sky,  
 '*Never eat goose on the first of May!*'

'Arm your door with a bay-mare's shoe!  
 Walk round ladders and don't ask why!  
 Guard your gates with a rowan or two!  
 'Ware if a crow to the left should fly!  
 Miss no flutter of jay or pie!  
 Meet no spiders at peep of day!  
 Once—I was crossed by a hare,' she'd sigh.  
 '*Never eat goose on the first of May!*'

'Turn your coin when the moon is new!  
 Take no heed of Solomon's cry!  
 Ants won't work as a model for you.  
 Four-leaved clover's the trick to try!  
 Pluck it at noon when the dew is dry,  
 Then you can whistle all care away.  
 Yet—when the thirteenth guest draws nigh—  
 '*Never eat goose on the first of May!*'

## L'Envoi.

'Hammer and pick at the church-doors ply!  
 These be the rules that the moderns obey.  
 Cross your fingers whenever you lie!

AND—

*Never eat goose on the first of May!*'

ALFRED NOYES.

## CANARY YELLOW.

BY C. GORDON GLOVER.

SHE was so gay through it all. Always smiling, and never letting me see how the pain and fear must have held her so cruelly between them. 'It will be all right,' she would say. 'It will be all right. To-morrow is so far, far away,' she would say, 'and it's to-day now, and sunshiny.' But when she drew in breath of the downland air she so loved it pained her poor chest. She must have minded. Oh, she must have minded so very terribly the thought that she might be taken away from everything. She had sunlight running in her blood, and she never wore a hat all that summer, so that her coppery hair could have the wind-run in it and be full of little lights. Even with the threat hanging over us it was a wonderful summer without any clouds over, and always she and I together. She was just like the weather, letting herself sway to the light ripples of mood, and always with me. Every day with me and I with her. Her voice was a little clear voice, like a river wind whispering, but she never let it whisper with pain. She brought such perfect peace and happiness to me.

She loved yellow. I loved it too. All her little summer frocks were yellow, bright and fluffed, showering around her slightness. And in the early mornings when I passed her cottage window I could hear her singing lightly upstairs as she dressed herself in one of her yellow frocks. She was even cheerful with herself, never letting herself give in and allow dread to master her. Though the doctors were so grave and gloomy over her. I would stand under her window and call up, 'Canary, little canary, sing again. Don't stop, just sing again.' And she would go on singing, all the way down the stairs she would go on singing till she came through the garden door, pale and white, but smiling in her little yellow frock. And the whole garden would be full of her brightness and her happy courage.

But it wasn't any good. They hoped the downland air would strengthen her. But it didn't seem to. She told me one day that she had to leave me. And even then she laughed, sliding her thin, poor arms over me, and saying, 'Oh, but it doesn't matter. It

has all been so lovely, so perfect. The summer has mattered, and even to-day matters. And perhaps I shall come back, well again, and it can start afresh and go on, and on for ever. . . .’ Her courage scythed through me, till I felt I couldn’t bear it. What sullen beastliness was the power that chose to disease my little canary, choking her slowly to death, quenching her voice, blinding her eyes? I knew that if she died she would smile and make the best of it. She could even make the best of a thing like death. I would have turned sour apostate to beauty and good, denying them, cursing them, had it not been for her gaiety and her hopefulness, had it not been for her trust and her unquestioning faith and acceptance of inevitables.

The day before she left me for Switzerland and the sanatorium they had chosen for her, she brought me something very bulky, wrapped loosely with brown paper. She unfurled it in my little study and stood it in the window. It was a golden cage with a canary in it. He was bright yellow with a dark shining eye, and as she stood him in the September sunshine he hopped to the top perch of his cage and flooded my room with music. ‘He’s for you,’ she said. ‘He’ll be company for you when I’m away. Perhaps he’ll make you think of me. I want him to do that. I want him to sing to you here, and keep you cheerful, and make you think that I’m getting well over there.’ My canary cocked his head on one side and looked at her. ‘You’ll sing to him, won’t you?’ she begged my canary, bending down and pursing her lips to him. ‘I put you in charge of him,’ she said.

She left me that afternoon. I saw her off at the station, and then I came back alone down the road we had walked along together so very often. I went into her cottage and helped them shut it up and put it in order. All the sun had gone from the cottage with her going, and even her little bedroom with its white lattice seemed dull and cold, sad without her. Looking from the window I could see her little garden, sun-laved, but running into the blowsy decline of the season. All over the downs was decline, and they were autumn-steeped and lonely. I felt that they were lonely for her. They were living still, but they were not alive with her happiness, and I thought of her going over them with me, and I was crushed down and never wanted to walk over my downs any more.

I hung my canary in the south window and he chirped to me as I held his golden cage aloft. Right in the window I hung him,



where the sunshine fell through and where he could look out over my garden to her empty cottage standing there before the uprise of the downs. 'There,' I said. 'Now you can see where she used to live. You remember her, don't you?' And he chirped again, cocking his head at me, and looking so wise as if to say, 'Yes, we won't forget her, either of us, will we?'

He was all the wonderful company she hoped he would be. He was just like her in her fluffed little summer frocks. I began to look upon him as being really her still with me. When he sang to me like he did on those warm late autumn days I used to know that she was still cheerful, and well. His song was such a wild, clear bubble of happy sound. I didn't know what I would do without him. I even used to take his cage down sometimes and set it on the table before me and talk to him. And he would cock his yellow head at me, and answer me back so cheerfully, my little canary. 'Sweet,' he would say, 'don't you worry. She's getting well, getting well, getting well, sweet, sweet, swee-eet!'

I loved him. I knew he was more than just a canary. He was her cheerfulness and her voice caged for me, and he wore the dress she wore, bright yellow. As I sat at my writing-desk working through the days he was never still above my head, always hopping here, and hopping there, scratching his little beak on the bars, singing, singing, singing to me as I worked, till I would cry out at him, I loved him so much.

She wrote to me quite regularly from Switzerland. I dreaded her letters. Queer that, wasn't it? But I did dread them, for I never knew what each might contain. They were just like her, full of her happy optimism and bravery. She wrote to me of the scenery around the sanatorium, telling me of the splintered peaks cutting into the sky, and of the clean pine-scents. She told me that she thought she was getting well. They were so good to her, she said, and she wanted me to be with her, she said. She planned for our future together in her letters. The purity of her faith and happiness was like strong fire. She always asked after my canary. She sent him her love.

Whenever I got a letter from her I would lift him down from the window and set him on the table beside me while I read the letter to him. Right through I would read it, and he would stop his chirping and listen patiently, his black eye turned on me. It was strange that he never interrupted when I was reading to him. He knew. Oh, he knew, that canary of mine, for when I had

finished reading, and when I had said, 'That last little bit's all for you,' he would spring on to his perch and ripple with song.

I think I should never have stood that winter had it not been for him. I think she had given him a little bit of her soul before she went away. He bore no grudge ever. Sometimes I would have to leave him alone all day, and when I came home in the evening he would take his head from his wing so, oh, so politely, and chirp a sleepy welcome. His feathers would ruffle, he would yawn—yes, canaries do yawn—and then he would show that he bore me no resentment by singing a brave little song. Though he was far more than half-asleep. 'Sweet,' he would say, 'sweet, she's all right, she's all right, she's all right I tell you, sweee-eet!'

In the mornings when I came down I would uncover his cage and he would thank me. And then he demanded his breakfast. What a to-do that was. Rattling his little gold wires, and tapping with his beak till I filled up his seed-crook. He would thank me with an extra special song, and after that was the order of the bath. The bright drops flew in showers and necklaces from his fluttering wings, and when it was all over, and when he had ruffled and unruffled a score of times, he disposed himself on his top perch to sing to me.

I saw her in him. In every movement was her own quick sensitiveness to life. His heart was her heart beating. Each tiny breath he took was her breathing. Each note he sang was her own cheerfulness, and in his bright plumage I saw her, reed-slender and fluffed with yellow, coming through her garden laughing, or walking on the downs with me. And as the winter reeled slowly away I became happier and happier in his singing. I felt about him that so long as he sang to me she was getting well. She wrote to tell me that she was. But that was not enough. He had to tell me too. I prayed to him to keep singing, singing, singing. I begged him for his brightness and his life, for it was her in my golden cage: it was her in there. And whenever he moped as he did sometimes my heart watered within me, because I felt that the thing was choking her, stifling her over there among those mountains.

It was in early spring that he ailed. Quite suddenly. Without any warning at all. One evening he sang to me so sweetly before I reproached him for a noisy fellow, and the next morning I came to bring him his seed and I knew that he was not well. So bravely he tried to be cheerful for me. He scratched punily at the bars. But there was no life in his poor, sweet scratchings. 'What is it?'

I asked him. 'What is it, dear mar?' 'Sweet,' he said, so, so bravely. He sat on his perch and cocked his little head at me, but his eye was not bright. There was cloudy film coming over it.

He tried to eat his breakfast. He tried so hard, and just to please me, cracking the light pods. But so feebly. And he didn't want his bath. I took him from the window and put him by the fire where it was warm, and he sat there gratefully, sometimes giving little contented chirps, but dying. He was dying, my poor little canary. And there was no letter from Switzerland that day.

So I knew it. Oh, it wasn't any use. I knew it then. My canary crouched there, panting, fighting for his tiny breaths. It was her in there, fighting for her life, with the stifling wickedness of the thing crushing her under, bruising her, hurting her. Everything was going then. I sat with him all that day, and the spring sun had turned to wind, a sad, dun wind with rain in its hands, souging over the downs, smattering and beating at my window. It was pitiful watching his fight for life, it was pitiful to hear his polite little 'thankyou's' when I did anything for him. He was so polite, that canary of mine, so cheerful. But it wasn't him alone I was watching in that fight. There was no colour or laughter any more anywhere. The world was greying over for me. It was all so hopeless.

I sat on with him that night, watching his little gasps, feeling in my own chest the pains that must have been cutting through his, and through hers. He rallied once or twice, and I thought he had turned the corner. Once he actually hopped on to his perch and tried to sing. But the song exhausted him, and he looked at me almost apologetically. He might have said, 'I'm sorry, so sorry. I tried to be cheerful. I did try to bluff it out, but I'm afraid it's no use. Forgive a fellow, will you?'

The absence of a letter might have meant anything. A post delayed, a post missed, anything like that. But it didn't. I knew that it didn't. I sat on there listening to the night beat away into dawn, hearing the wet wind let up and soothe into the pale quiet of early morning. Just once more he rallied, but it was no use. For a long, long time he crouched on the bottom of his cage, and then he sprang up quite brightly, and sat on his low perch. He gave a little 'sweet,' very faintly, and then he was dead.

And I knew that the fight had gone against her. I knew that it was all over and done with, and that there would be no more

laughter, no smiling for her and me any more. Her spirit had left my golden cage.

I buried him under the almond-tree where he had swung in his cage once or twice in the sunny autumn afternoons. Quite a little grave, and I filled it with yellow crocuses and a few late snowdrops. I was burying everything in those few inches of Kentish soil. It had gone against her, that was all I understood, and I knew that it would be such a long, long wait for me in the years ahead.

After my breakfast there was no letter. So I knew then all right. I knew then. She was gone away like he had gone away. I knew she had given him a little of her soul.

But I was wrong. I was wrong. She came through my own doorway not one hour later, laughing and wearing canary-yellow. I could only stare at her. I thought she might be a ghost. I really did. But she wasn't that. She was herself, and wearing canary yellow and laughing. 'I'm well,' she said, 'I'm well. I didn't write—I came to tell you myself. It's over. . . .'

I said to her a little later. 'But he died—oh, why did he die? I thought his dying meant . . .'

'Hush,' she said. 'He died because he had done his little task. He wasn't needed any more. He must have known,' she said, 'that I was coming back to you. He just wasn't needed any more.'

## THE JUSTICE OF THE DESERT

BY DOUGLAS V. DUFF.

To those of us accustomed to the pomp and circumstance of the administration of Justice, the scarlet robes, grey wigs, javelin men, flash and glitter of guards of honour, uniformed police, and the thousand and one details which add glamour to the majesty of the Law, it may be interesting to have recounted the procedure of the Bedouin Courts in the Southern Desert of Palestine. These tribunals, held under the same commission from the same King as any Assize in far-off Britain, are as dissimilar from them as they can possibly be. Here there is no dock, no witness-box, no jury seats, no police and warders, and, although there is, necessarily, an accused, he is far different from the cowed, subdued figure that one sees awaiting his fate in our courts.

The district south of Beersheba, in the angle formed between the frontiers of Transjordan, Arabia and the Sinai Province of Egypt, is administered in an entirely different manner to the remainder of Palestine. To the north the Ottoman Penal Code obtains, and the Courts are, with the exception of a jury, pale imitations of our own. But, in this southern area, all cases are tried by the Tribal Courts, and the Sheikhs of the fighting tribes sit as judges to administer the patriarchal Justice of the Desert in all matters from murder to petty theft, and their sentences, after being confirmed by the central authority in Jerusalem, are duly carried into effect. Unfortunately homicide takes up a great deal of their time, a not surprising fact when the number of blood-feuds are considered, and that, in this tribal area, no young Bedouin considers himself a man, until he has been on *ghazu*, the immemorial raiding warfare of the tribesmen. There is no restriction on the carrying of arms, except that rifles of .303 calibre, the British pattern, are forbidden, with the result that most of the Bedouin firearms are old Turkish and German Mausers. The old six-foot ornamented, engraved gun of the Arabs is seldom seen nowadays, the tribesmen had plenty of opportunity to acquire modern weapons from the battlefields of the Great War, and, by carefully re-capping, re-loading with black powder the expended brass cartridge-cases, and fitting a rough lead bullet, they have an inexhaustible supply of ammunition. In addition, most men carry a curved sword, and



one or more ornately hilted daggers, whilst lances are still to be found amongst the retinues of the more important chieftains. With these weapons, the hot blood of the Desert tribes, and the ancient grievances of the blood-feud and grazing quarrels, not to mention the Bedouins' love of loot, it is not surprising that there are so many cases of homicide continually appearing before the Tribal Courts. The only Government official present at the sitting of this tribunal is, generally, the District Officer of Beersheba, who is there in a purely advisory capacity. Imagine the scene.

Rolling desolation of undulating sandy country, with a few stunted bushes and a little coarse grass showing through the soil. In the near distance, the huddled collection of army huts, fast disappearing into the sand, that once was the Turkish concentration camp for the great march on the Suez Canal. Auja el Hafir, miles south of Beersheba, close to the Egyptian frontier, is the name of this desolate huddle of hutments, with its deserted hospitals, mosques, barracks and prisons, all with the wind-blown sand of fifteen years piled almost to the roof-beams on the windward sides. Close to one of the wells, a few hundred yards away, there are rows and rows of the black, goat-hair Arab tents, the dwellings of the Sheikhs who have been summoned to act as judges and assessors, or of the accused and the witnesses, whilst there is also a strong gathering of the tribesmen of both parties, that of the killers' and the killed.

As the sky begins to pale in the East, over the distant hills beyond the far-off Dead Sea, there is a hum and stir of activity as the tents begin to disgorge their inhabitants. The firearms of both parties are deposited with the Palestine Police outpost in the abandoned camp, and with side-arms only the Bedouins muster on the westward side of one of the largest derelict buildings, whose height will give shade for another couple of hours after sunrise. Close to the wall of the building, on gaudy carpets and *lahafs*, the Sheikhs who are to be the judges take their seats. One or two of them, the laxer brethren, have their *narghilehs*, water-pipes, prepared and placed close to them, gold-tipped *Regie Ottomane* cigarettes are in readiness for most of the others, whilst one or two of the older chiefs, stern believers in the strict letter of the Faith, look with contempt on these breaches of the Koran, and pray that it will not be long before the fanatical riders of Abdul Wahab, from the Deserts of Nejd, put a stop to these abuses.

With much bustle the stage is finally set, the fifteen Sheikhs

who form the court sit in a semicircle facing the tribesmen, who squat in a solid mass before them. Suddenly there is a faint, far call, the *Muezzin* in the decrepit camp is calling the Faithful to prayer, it is the hour of the Day Opening. Judges, accused, witnesses and onlookers, face the south, towards where the Sacred City lies, and go through the genuflections and prostrations of Islam's morning worship. As the Prayer finishes, with much rustling of garments and hitching aside of sword-scabbards, the gathering again settles down to the business of the day. Old Sheikh Musa el Araj, chieftain of the Terrabin Arabs, is the president; his tribe is not affected on this occasion, neither the victim nor the slayer being numbered amongst his subjects.

Gravely he looks at his companion-judges and says, stroking his short, grey beard :

'In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Lord of the Day of Judgment, this Court is open. Let each of us, O my brothers, give judgment as we consider just and right.'

'*Inshallah*, as God wills,' they piously reply, and sit back to hear the case brought before them.

Sheikh Musa looks up, makes a gesture with his hand, and asks :  
'Who makes complaint to this gathering of Sheikhs ?'

An elderly Arab, bearded, his black *abiya* wrapped closely about him to repel the dawn chill, not yet dispersed by the rapidly rising sun, replies :

'I do, Your Presences, *ya Hadaratkhum el Musheiyek*, I, Mohammed abu Rashid of the Beni Hassan. I claim of you justice on the slayers of my son, my younger son, Ahmet, who was killed on the last day of the month of Nishan by two dogs of the Sbeid tribe.'

The Sheikhs of the Sbeid, who sit amongst the judges, stir angrily at the word 'dog,' and Sheikh Musa quietly tells the complainant to confine himself to his complaint, and cease insulting his brethren in Islam.

Mohammed abu Rashid continues, after asking pardon of the Sheikhs concerned. 'Yea, willingly will I tell your Presences of the manner in which my son died. He was a good son, and one on whom I relied for support in my old age, for all men know that my other boy, Rashid, was shot in the head and has ever since been touched by the Hand of Allah, so that he says strange things and is of no more use either for work, war or the bringing up of fine sons to fill the tents of my fathers. Valuable was my son

Ahmet to me, doubly valuable as he would have provided not only for me in my old age, but also for his brother Rashid, whose brain is now so strange that he can do nothing. *Aiee, aiee*, what will become of us when I am too old to care for my helpless ones ?'

'Hush, Y' *Akhi*, O my Brother, Hush,' interjects the old Sheikh, 'are not all matters in the Hand of God ? Was it not written that thus and thus should befall both you and your sons ? Who are you to rail against the Will of Allah ?'

A low murmur of approval runs through the packed ranks and the semicircle of judges, whilst Mohammed strangles his grief and continues :

'I stand rebuked, O my Father. You have spoken well. Who am I to question the Will of God ? What is written is written and must be for the best. Then hear my tale, one and all. Ahmet left my tents three days before the full of the moon of Nishan, to take sheep and goats to Abdul Kerim el Muhtadi, the butcher who sits at the gate of the *Suq* in Hebron, the city of our father El Khalil u'Ullah (Abraham). For two days he journeyed, and when he approached close to Tel el Mehil, three men of the Sbeid met him, men of the Ghor, wild and fierce. They told him and his servant, Redwan, a negro whose fathers have been owned by my fathers ever since the days of Mohammed Ali Pasha, to surrender the sheep and goats to them, and that they would let them proceed unharmed, except for the loss of their weapons. Ahmet refused, and was shot dead by the three sons of Shame, Redwan being left for dead, a bullet having scraped his skull without doing more harm than stunning him.'

'The slave, running swiftly, brought news within a day to me, and, mustering my few servants, I pursued hotly after them, and came up with the robbers near Jebel Usdum. Seeing my men they fled amongst the cliffs of salt, leaving the flock for us to drive back ; but we recognised two of the killers. They were Izhak and Hamid, the sons of Ibrahim el Ghazi of the Sbeid. And now I ask Justice of you, Justice against the slayers of my son. As they shed his blood so may their blood be shed.'

'How did you recognise the youths ?' asked one of the Sheikhs.

'Because, having gained safety from my men, they were, at one place, still within earshot, and called back to me, "O Father of disease-ridden dogs, know that it is us, Izhak and Hamid beni Ibrahim, who slew that poor spirited whelp of yours."'

The father was motioned to resume his place, and Redwan, the

black *abid* (literally 'slave'), was questioned and confirmed the details of the attack and murder. Also that he had heard the taunting shouts of the killers as they disappeared before the pursuers, admitting their identities.

Gravely Sheikh Musa ordered the two accused young men to stand up and approach closer. Rising from their haunches both young men stepped proudly forward, and made the Arab salute of deference to the assembled judges. Magnificent specimens they both were. Close to six feet in height, black-bearded, hawk-nosed, majestic in stance, they fixed their light-brown eyes on the President, their hands clasped modestly before them.

'Heard ye the plaint of Mohammed abu Rashid?'

'*Naam, ya Hadratakh*, Yes, Your Presence,' they both replied.

'Spake he truth or falsehood?'

'Truth, O my Father, but told it in a false manner,' answered Izhak, the elder.

'Did ye kill Ahmet, his son?'

'I slew him,' admitted Izhak. 'I slew him in fair fight with no aid from anyone. Hamid, my brother, had nothing to do with his killing. He was fighting with the *abid*. And there were only the two of us. There was no third man.'

'If ye slew him in fair fight,' asked one of the Sheikhs, 'why did ye steal his flock?'

'Well, my Father,' answered Hamid, 'believing that both were killed we saw that there was a fine flock before us, and what Son of the Arab would refuse the lawful spoils of his arms?'

Both judges and audience saw the force of this argument and pursued it no further. After all, it *was* the normal thing to do.

'Then tell us how the matter occurred,' said Sheikh Musa.

''Twas thus and thus,' replied Izhak. 'Hamid, my brother, and I were sent by my father to look for three camel-calves that had strayed. Not finding them we decided to ride to Beersheba and to tell the English *Mudir* that three of our camels were missing, so that if any son of a dog should offer camel-calves with our markings upon them for sale, he might prevent us being robbed. Near Tel el Mehil we saw a dustcloud coming from the south, and we rode towards it, hoping that the approaching men might give us some news of our missing beasts, and so save us the long ride to Beersheba. When we came close we found that it was Ahmet ibn Mohammed of the Beni Hassan. As ye all know we of the Sbeid are at blood-feud with this family of the Beni Hassan, for did not

Mohammed's grandfather betray my father's grandfather to *Abuna Barte* (Napoleon Bonaparte) in the city of Gaza, and the accursed foreigner caused my ancestor to be hanged and his body burnt in the market-place? Since then there has been blood in rivers between us. Ahmet was older than we and he taunted us, thinking that we should never dare to attack him. Finally he referred to the cause of all our feud, and said that he hoped, some day, to see all of us of the Abu Sbeid hanged and burned like our ancestor. Then did I fall upon him, drawing my sword I rushed, whilst Hamid similarly attacked the *abid*. Vainly did Ahmet strive to tear the rifle from its sling around his shoulder, no bullet was fired by either of us, with our swords we laid them to the earth. His father lies when he says that we shot Ahmet and creased the black man's skull with a bullet. With my blade I killed Ahmet and with his steel did Hamid fell the negro, meaning to kill him also. Glad am I that I killed Ahmet, for did he not taunt the honour of my tribe, and, when I was but a lad, he struck me with a whip and, with the help of his family, killed Mustapha, the son of my father's brother.'

Hamid, questioned, confirmed the tale of his elder brother. Mohammed, recalled, confessed that he was not certain how his son had been killed, it might have been with a sword—whilst the negro was too confused to be able to tell anything other than the story he had been drilled to recount for months back, breaking down hopelessly under cross-examination, and finally admitting that he thought it was a sword that had caused his injuries.

Meanwhile the sun had climbed high. Slowly the shadow had retreated from the spectators, had reached the accused, climbed across the feet of the judges, and now blazed remorselessly down upon the whole gathering. Sheikh Musa rose solemnly to his feet, raised his hand and addressed the people:

'Let all men retire to the shelter of their tents, and let them desist from all idle talk about the things that they have heard in this place to-day. This camp is beneath the protection of *El Artufna El Melik Giryess el Khamis*, His Majesty King George the Fifth, *Kezar el Ingliz wa el Billad ul Falastin*, Emperor of the English and of the Land of Palestine, anyone who breaks the peace of this camp will not be responsible to us, the Sheikhs, but to His Presence the *Mudir*, who sits here in the place of his King. Hear and Obey. Before the hour of evening prayer let all assemble at this place and hear the decision of the *Mekhemeh*, the Court.'

Slowly the long day wore to its close. The hot desert sun still



further blistered the desiccated concrete walls of the hutments. The Sheikhs and the *Mudir*, the latter as host, spent the morning in discussing the affairs of the district, this meeting being a great opportunity to transact official business whilst the chiefs were gathered together. At noon he left them to discuss the case, and, after they had all slept away the drowsy afternoon hours, they gathered, with the westering sun, at the place of trial. All assembled, and Sheikh Musa held up his hand for silence :

'O my Brothers,' he commenced, 'we your chiefs have considered carefully the case brought before us, and with heavy hearts have decided that murder was done. Stand up Izhak and Hamid, sons of Ibrahim, and hear the sentence of this Court upon you.'

Both men jumped to their feet and made salutation to the assembled Sheikhs.

'Ye know, my sons, that ye have killed, and in killing have destroyed an old man's one hope. For it is true that his other son is mad, having been touched by the hand of Allah, and is of no use to him. Therefore ye shall pay blood-money to the father of him ye slew. One hundred and fifty camels shall ye pay before the guiltiness is removed from you.'

Both boys blanched at the tremendous fine. There were not that number of camels in the whole of the Sbeid tribe. But Arab etiquette is an unbreakable code. Composedly they touched their foreheads, '*Tah Omrakhum, ya Hadratkhum el Musheiyek*, Beneath your Orders, O Your Presences the Sheikhs,' they dutifully said, whilst exclamations of satisfaction and grunts of dismay arose respectively from Beni Hassan and Sbeid spectators.

But equally fixed is the remainder of Court etiquette. The *Mudir*, slowly rose to his feet, a silence falling as it became apparent he was about to speak :

'Your judgment, O Sheikhs, all accept. It is as though you had spoken in wisdom like unto Suleiman el Hakim himself. But, for my sake, the sake of a foreigner but your servant, the sake of one who sits in the seat of Government at Beersheba and has always tried to do his best for you, remit fifty camels of the fine, so that the hearts of the Sbeid may be raised up and their little children not die of hunger. This I beg of you to do if both sides will agree to submit their blood-feud to arbitration and settlement.'

Sheikh Musa makes a pretence of questioning his fellow-judges, and remits the fifty camels with a flowery speech of appreciation for the *Mudir*. Then each sheikh of the tribunal asks, according

to his position, for a remittal of the fine, one for twenty, another for ten, another for five until at last fifteen camels are fixed, to the mutual satisfaction of both sides, as a fitting compensation to Abu Rashid for the murder of his son. Dates are fixed for the meeting to arbitrate on the blood-feud, and, as the first notes of the muezzin break on the evening air, the assembly falls in the sunset prayer of Islam, ere parting, to meet again at the great feast at which all will gather as soon as darkness falls.

Thus the Desert justice; but let us see another scene in the settlement of disputes between the Arabs. Months later the arbitration meeting has sat, it has gone back three generations to find who was responsible for the commencement of the blood-feud, to enquire into the circumstances of the alleged betrayal of the Sbeid ancestor to the French troops of Bonaparte. The leaders of both sides have lied stolidly and stubbornly, and it is impossible to arrive at the truth. Once again the aged Sheikh Musa has sat as judge, and he finds that he cannot make up his mind. For days the proceedings have dragged along with no hope of a solution being found, tempers are growing ever shorter, and there appears to be every chance of renewed hostilities between the tribesmen. At last he rises and says:

'*Wullahi*, I can believe neither of you. Let God show the right. We will use the customs of our fathers to arrive at the truth of this matter. Are you both willing to entrust yourselves to the Judgment of Allah?'

Both leaders must, perforce, either agree or admit the falsity of their claims. They know what is coming, and signify their acceptance.

'Then,' says Sheikh Musa, 'on the seventh night from this, the night of the full moon, we will meet in the *Wadi* valley, south of the village of Dahariyah and allow Haj Zaki el Mograbi to decide in the time-honoured manner which of ye lies, and which of you has truth in his mouth.'

On the seventh night, as the great golden ball of the moon climbs over the shoulders of the eastern hills, there is a great gathering of Bedouins in the Wadi. Their weapons, they having entered Administered territory, are stored in the Police Barracks at Beer-sheba, each man carefully guarding a receipt for them in the folds of his waist-belt. In the recesses of a small cave in the mountain-side a fire is burning, whilst at its entrance sit Sheikh Musa and

the other arbitrators, the two leaders and the venerable figure of an old Haji, the green turban of the Pilgrimage encircling his head. The Haji addresses the clustered, silent people who press as close as they dare.

'Ye have come to me this night in order that God may show the truth of this quarrel. In the ancient manner of our people we will attempt to show the right. But first I will have the five golden English *Guineas* from each side which is my fee for performing my mystery.'

The money is solemnly counted out to him. A short prayer is said asking that God will show the justice of the contended cause, and the two leaders are told to stand, side by side, close to the cave-mouth. By this time the moon is casting a brilliant light on the desolate mountain-side, and everything appears almost as bright as day. Solemnly the old Haji takes a long metal spoon, places it in the fire, and allows it to grow white hot, mumbling prayers as he does so. A deathlike stillness broods over the people watching every movement intently. As the spoon approaches incandescence the Haji again turns to the people.

'I shall place this spoon upon the tongue of each of these two men. One will be burnt, the other will not be injured. The one in whose mouth truth dwells will escape scathless from the ordeal, he who lies will suffer. For the last time,' turning to the disputants, 'will ye, so that we may not lightly call upon the Judgment of Allah, confess which one of ye lies?'

Both stubbornly maintain the truth of their different stories, and with a sudden movement the Haji takes the long spoon from the flames and tells each man: 'Lick this fiery spoon, trusting in God to protect the truthful man.' He places the glowing metal for a second in the mouth of the Sbeid leader, then withdraws it. A long-drawn sigh rises from the audience as the man appears to be none the worse. Then he thrusts it into the mouth of the Beni Hassan spokesman, who immediately yells with pain and staggers away with a badly-burned mouth. Justice is done, Allah has shown the truth, the arbitration can now be easily arranged.

How is it done? No one knows, yet it is done, frequently, by this one man the old Haji, to whom the people come from all over Palestine and even from far-away Syria. Is he judiciously bribed by one party, or does he shrewdly suspect the guilty one and makes sure that that one is the burnt, or—what is the explanation?

## THE STREET?

BY ELIZABETH HORSFALL.

I WAS standing on an island at one of London's busiest crossings when I first saw him.

A policeman, just going off point duty, was sharing the island with me, large and placid, and with that air of comfortable omniscience that seems to be the prerogative of the Metropolitan police.

It was just as the last cars and taxis were hurrying to get through before the hold-up, that a man dodged recklessly among them and, gaining the island, spoke to the policeman at my side. A lull came in the noise in time for me to hear his answer, 'No, sir, I'm sorry, but you won't find it round here.' 'Are you sure? It's so important for me to find the street . . .' The desperate ring in the cultured, scholarly voice caught my attention, and I looked more closely at the speaker. I saw a man of rather slight build, with a melancholy, intellectual face; he was perhaps fifty-five years of age. The next moment he had run hurriedly across the street and had disappeared.

The constable and I stepped off the island together. 'That's a queer case,' he said, half-shamefacedly at talking to a possibly uninterested stranger. 'Everyone knows him in this part of London. He's always asking us where he can find that street. And there isn't such a place, you know.' He turned to me with an air of rebuke, as though in some way I were responsible for the eccentricity of the feckless seeker after a street that did not exist. 'Dotty, poor bloke, I should think. He's been asking for that street for the last five years on and off, and he's aged twenty in the time. Queer business, very . . .' and he marched away with a grumpy air that said plainly, 'The police have enough to bother them without that sort of nonsense.'

Two days later I saw the street-seeker again. He was standing at one side of one of those small circuses of which there are so many in Soho, where three or four little streets meet. Suddenly he started off down one of them almost at a run, but after a few steps wavered and turned back, looking anxiously up at the houses as he passed. The spurt of energy that had sent him at such a pace

down the street had vanished, and his face looked drawn and exhausted as he passed me and walked wearily away.

I remember I almost went up to him to ask what drove him to look for a shadowy street amidst the gay activity of Soho. Discretion, conventionality, triumph of courtesy over curiosity, one or all of these prevented me, and as I watched him disappear I thought regretfully that I should probably never know what street it was he searched for so passionately and why.

Three months later Fate satisfied my curiosity. It was dusk and an October wind was blowing the dry leaves about Soho Square as I came through it on my way northward and home. Just outside Saint Patrick's, a man whom I had dimly seen standing on the pavement by the church came up to me. 'I beg your pardon,' he said, 'but can you direct me to Rue Street? It must be somewhere quite near here, and I cannot find it.' The voice touched my memory, and I peered at the enquirer's face in the half-light. It was the man whom the policeman had told me had been looking for this street for five years.

'I'm afraid I don't know the street,' I told him. 'Are you sure it's in this district at all?' He looked at me intently for a minute as though to be sure of my good faith. Then: 'That's what they all tell me, and I know it was here, I know it. And I must find it . . .' It was the voice of a man whose nerves were strained to cracking-point. But the good breeding so apparent in the cultured voice asserted itself. 'Forgive me,' he said, 'I am tired to-night. Forgive me and thank you.'

As he stepped off the pavement into the Square I saw a car driven recklessly and fast sweep round the corner. I shouted. It was too late. There was a shriek of brakes and a cry, and in another minute I was kneeling by his crushed body.

. . . . .

I had my first talk with him three days after. Someone had told him I had called to enquire at the hospital, and he had asked to see me. There was not much hope for him, they said, he was terribly injured, but he had asked so persistently for me that they had thought it better to indulge him.

Strangely enough he looked younger. The anxious, unsatisfied expression had gone. In its place was a look of contentment, almost as though he were glad of the brutal turn Fate had done him.

He began to talk of the street almost at once, in jerky, gasping



sentences; his voice every now and then dropping so low that I could hardly catch the words. 'I shall never find it now,' he said, and then half-whimsically, 'Well, perhaps it won't matter so much to me now. . . .'

He went on, urgently: 'I want to tell you about it. I must tell someone at last, and you have been kind. . . . It is only to a stranger one can tell things like this.

'The street . . . and the book-shop . . . and her . . . I have looked for them a long time. Perhaps they never really existed. I was so sure they did . . . now I don't know. But I will tell you . . .

'It was five years ago that I met her. She was strange, beautiful I thought, but perhaps to others not so beautiful, pale with dark hair, and light eyes whose pupils grew big if she laughed or was unhappy or excited, until her eyes turned black.

'I was much older than she was, almost middle-aged, and she was twenty-five. Almost every evening after my work, I would go to her flat over the book-shop in Rue Street, and we would drink tea, China tea, Formosa Loulong (how she loved the name), and talk. I think we were very happy. But she was strange. "Fey" is the only word that describes those moods of hers. She had Celtic blood, she told me once, and they are strange people. She would be wildly happy, and then suddenly say odd, disturbing, sad things. She told me once: "If you leave me, if you don't want me any more, I shall disappear. You will never find me again." It made me angry. I hated that side of her, and now I think I feared it. I wanted everything to be at its face value, ordinary and sane and Anglo-Saxon. The rest was morbid nonsense I told myself.

'She was never possessive. Don't imagine that. But she loved me too much. It irked me after a time. I had my other life, my work, my friends, my interests, and I was a fool. I didn't know where happiness lay. Oh God, why didn't I know? . . .'

A shiver ran over the injured body that lay so pitifully inert in the hospital bed, and he was silent for so long that I was about to go and fetch help, when he began to speak again, so low this time that I could hardly hear the words.

'I don't know why we quarrelled. But I was angry when I told her it must end. I hardly meant it even then. I didn't realise she would take it so tragically. I was a fool, a selfish fool, afraid of feeling too much.

'She said nothing, but her eyes turned dark, and she flinched as

though I had struck her. Have you ever hurt someone like that and enjoyed it ? I was angry, angry with myself for loving her, with her for being too fond.

'I went away. For three days I kept silence, glad at first, and then hoping every minute she would write, ring up, anything.

'On the third evening I telephoned to her. All day I had thought, "To-night I shall hear her speak." I saw in my mind the odd little house in the Soho Street, with its street musicians, the Italian café next door where the taxi-drivers sat over their mugs of coffee, even the glass-blowers whose weird, flickering lights showed all day through their windows opposite. And I knew how valuable she was to me. . . .' The ague-like shiver shook him again, and his voice sank to a whisper.

Suddenly some force seemed to fill him. He looked at me fiercely, as at an enemy who had robbed him, and shouted weakly, 'It was too late. Too late, I tell you.' The effort seemed to exhaust him, and he was silent. Then in a mumbling, mechanical voice, like a child repeating a lesson, he went on quickly :

'I tried her telephone number. I couldn't get through. I tried again, and then again. Then I rang the exchange. They said I had made a mistake, they knew no such number. It was then I felt the first fear, though I told myself that mistakes were common enough, that telephone operators were imbecile. Anything to explain to myself what had happened.

'I left the telephone and went out. She will laugh, I said to myself, to hear that I forgot her number. And all the time I was fevered with impatience, hurrying through the streets to find her . . .' His voice broke into a sigh that was almost a sob. . . .

'I never saw her again. *I couldn't find the street.* I walked all night through the Soho streets, but that street was gone.

'I thought I was mad. By the morning I think I was. Because it must be there. It must be real, and I cannot find it. Or was it never there ? Have I looked for five years for a street that has never been, for a woman who was a dream ? But I *know* it was real, I know she was there, and I can never find her, never, never. . . .'

It was the silence that told me he had fainted.

As I left the hospital I thought of the strange story I had heard. A mad story told by a man who seemed as sane as myself. An

incomplete, ragged story that left me with a thousand questions unanswered.

Could his love-affair have been a dream, an illusion? Where had he met the girl? Why had he not married her? Who was he? How did he live? Had a Rue Street ever existed in London?

All these questions and many more I asked myself, resolving that next day I would ask him to explain so much he had left vague in his queer confession. I would get to know what this eerie business really meant, I told myself. He wouldn't mind questions to-morrow when he was better.

I went early to the hospital next day. I was impatient for the answers to questions that had troubled me all night. I felt half-ashamed of being so haunted by the story, so eager to know the rest. When he was well, I thought, we would go into his tale together, and common sense should lay his ghosts. What had he said? 'I shall never find it now.' A good sign that of his escape from an hallucination.

When I reached the hospital I was told that he was dead.

## *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER.*

BY LLEWELYN POWYS.

IN my library I have an old edition of the Common Prayer Book of England published by the Clarendon Press at Oxford in 1813. The book belonged to my grandfather and his name, written in pencil, is still legible after one hundred and twenty years. The affection I feel for it is strengthened by the fact that it was the one I was accustomed to use sitting by my mother's side in the chancel pew at Montacute in Somerset.

As I opened its pages yesterday, so discoloured with age, there came back to my mind a thousand associations of my childhood, clear memories out of the past of those old-fashioned services attended by me in the 'innocency of my life.' Once more there returned to my consciousness the recollection of the particular hush that used to follow the first appearance of my father coming out of the vestry with his aged clerk close upon his heels. Once more I remembered the old-time atmosphere of summer services, when, on every side of St. Catherine's Church, the harvest fields were bearing aloft the food of man thick as bread; the old-time atmosphere of winter services when the country lanes, between the leafless hedges, were foul, and the road that led from the vicarage to the church ran with two streams of rain-water, the Thames and the Severn, as we children named them.

As I continued to read this manual of my father's religion, of my country's religion, so plainly set down in the vulgar tongue, my imagination became stirred by the comprehension of its long usage beyond my own experience, beyond the experience of my father, until presently my spirit was utterly submerged as by a huge wave of human emotion that for centuries had been gathering about this grave and ancient script, this impressive portfolio of religious wisdom, so painfully stored up by our fathers, and by the old men before them. Words from this book have mingled with the cries of babies held at the font, cries whose impotent disobedience has sounded so pitiful to adult hearing, as they have echoed along hollow aisles adorned with memorial tablets to men and women long since dead. They have mingled with the subdued whispering

voices of village people called together for marriage feasts so many generations ago that the brides and the grooms, the priests and the clerks, with the whole company of their attendant congregations, are now as though they had never been. They have mingled with the tears of how many mourners, of mourners standing desolate when the corpse awaits burial, the corpse of an octogenarian ; of a dutiful mother, the stay of a large family ; of a child suddenly fever-stricken for no reason ; of a girl foredone in the flower of her youth, passionately beloved by her companion of the fields beyond reason and religion ; the words were heard again when the bitterness of five faithful decades was at last cancelled and the outraged heart at peace, and he who had sorrowed and she who had been sorrowed for were at one, with the honeysuckle lanes of their summer walks obliterated from memory for ever and for ever.

Even to-day if I enter a church and listen to these ancient words being said I feel upon me the impressive weight of their immemorial cadences, of the cadences of this ancient ritual that represents so hoar a thoroughfare, and with its long, long memory bestows upon frail mortal life so chartered a significance, offering, as it were, causeway shelter to so many individual souls, timid, eager for guidance.

Many influences went to make up the present form of our Prayer Book. Except in the case of those insertions that have to do especially with England it is possible to trace to their original Christendom sources the greater part of this celebrated Reformation liturgy. This fact in no way detracts from the value of the book as a national document, the prayers and the forms that have been preserved, and the prayers and the forms that have been omitted, seeming to reflect with a perfect sureness the predominating slant of the English temperament. For this reason it is by no means easy for a British subject to consider the book with impartial objectivity. Such an attempt is however in no way dishonourable. In our advance towards a higher civilisation it is necessary for us to be constantly concerned with revaluations, and to preserve from traditional teaching, from traditional practices, only those things that accord with our acquired knowledge and with the ideals to which we have given our adherence.

On examination, then, it is possible to distinguish in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer three distinct moods. The first of these component moods, and perhaps the strongest and most prevailing, is the essential racial character of its feeling, revealed, not only



by the reserve of its language, but also by the good sense of its stubborn disregard of logic and obstinate reliance, at every chance, upon compromise. The spirit of the book, the wide scope of this very practical broad-meshed net of St. Peter, is well illustrated by certain sentences from its Preface.

‘It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England ever since the first compiling of her Publick Liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing and of too much easiness in any variation from it. . . . The minds of men are so diverse . . . some think it a great matter of conscience to depart from a piece of the least of these ceremonies, they be so addicted to their old customs : and again on the other side, some be so new-fangled, that they would innovate all things, and so despise the old that nothing can like them, but that is new.’

To find metaphysical solutions, infallible and conclusive, for the conflicting Reformation controversies was, so it seems, beyond our island wits, so as usual our good bishops had resort to practical measures and this sensible attitude from the first was strongly supported by the crown, by King Edward VI, and still more by Queen Elizabeth, the limit of whose patience before theological conundrums was very soon reached. In the Caroline Declaration prefacing the thirty-nine articles of religion ‘from which We will not endure any varying or departing in the least degree’ we read some very plain speech.

‘No man, hereafter, shall attempt to draw a single Article aside in any way but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof ; and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense . . . We will that all further curious search be laid aside . . . and if any Divine in the Universities shall preach or print anything either way, other than is already established in Convocation with Our Royal assent ; he or they the Offenders, shall be liable to Our displeasure and the Church’s censure in Our Commission Ecclesiastical, as well as any other : and We will see there shall be done Execution upon them.’

With manifest truth it is asserted that the book contains nothing ‘which a godly man may not with a good conscience use and submit unto,’ and in a tone that belongs to philosophy rather than to ecclesiasticism we find it solemnly affirmed ‘There was never anything devised, or so sure established, which in continuance of time

hath not been corrupted.' Always the Church of England has been suspicious of exact schoolmen definitions, has become restless in the presence of too nice theological disputations, has favoured broad interpretations, not hesitating to give tacit encouragement to the ministers and 'stewards of her mysteries' to exercise the civilised habit of looking both ways at the same time.

The royal hatchments nailed up at the Restoration testify to the fact that confidence in God and confidence in the King are sentiments hardly to be separated in this constitutional persuasion. In the Englishman's mind God Almighty and the lion and the unicorn are closely associated. For this reason it almost seems when one of the King's subjects is buried 'in the sure and certain hope of eternal life' that the solemn covenant depends for its fulfilment as much on the broad seal of England as upon any divine dispensation.

How national, how close to the buttercup pastures of the English shires are the prayers that ascend each Sunday to this island God, to this God of Raleigh, of Drake, and of Nelson; to this old-world deity of an insular people renowned and patriotic! 'O Lord, raise up (we pray thee) thy power, and come amongst us, and with great might succour us . . . and defend us. . . . Deliver us, we humbly beseech thee, from the hands of our enemies, abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices.' This is the outcry of a primitive clan whose chief concern is for protection and preservation. Semi-barbarous though these prayers often are they are seldom lacking in dignity. Nevertheless, one cannot help wondering, how a free citizen of a nation other than England would regard the following example of ingenuous arrogance! 'O Eternal Lord God, who also spreadest out the heavens, and rulest the raging of the sea; who hast compassed the waters with bands until day and night come to an end. . . . Preserve us . . . that we may be a surety for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions.'

Once long ago for a short interval the lion's tail was rudely trodden upon and the 'glory' on the unicorn's brow almost brought to the ground. The Church of England has never forgotten the shock of those indignities.

'Almighty God and heavenly father, who of thine infinite and unspeakable goodness towards us, didst in a most extraordinary and wonderful manner disappoint and overthrow the wicked designs of those traitorous, heady, and high-minded men, who, under the pretence of Religion and thy most Holy Name, had contrived, and

wellnigh affected the utter destruction of this Church and Kingdom . . . Protect and defend our Sovereign Lord the King, with the whole Royal Family from all treasons and conspiracies. Be unto him a helmet of Salvation, and a strong tower of defence, against the face of all his enemies ; clothe them with shame and confusion but upon Himself and his Posterity let the crown forever flourish.'

In the rubric of the Common Prayer there are to be found many directions that have to do with the life of the realm far enough removed from Principalities and Powers. They reflect to perfection the monotonous, humdrum, day-by-day existence of the Commonwealth that continues without change from generation to generation. Fathers, mothers, masters, and dames are exhorted to cause their children, servants, and apprentices to learn their catechism. No ordinance for the seemly conduct of a man's life is omitted. Even such a practical affair as the making of 'a last will and testament' is not neglected, and in one passage the Clergy are duly advised that men 'should often be put in remembrance to take order for the settling of their temporal estates, whilst they are in health.'

Could anything read more unemotional, more homely than the arrangements to be made in preparation for a wedding? 'At the day and time appointed for the solemnisation of Matrimony, the persons to be married shall come into the body of the church with their friends and neighbours.' One would hardly have thought it possible that any religion, even by law established, could have introduced in so imperturbable a manner the celebration of love's flaming passion, with most other nations a matter for flutes and pipes! The same pain is taken to render the celebration of the Communion Service matter-of-fact and sensible, to preserve, as the Prayer Book naïvely says, 'the dignity of that holy mystery.' The wafer, so the directions run, must be of 'bread such as is usual to be eaten ; but the best and purest Wheat Bread that conveniently can be gotten.' Finally, 'in the black rubric' the frenzied disagreements that have always surrounded this wild Christian rite are firmly brought to an end: 'For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored ; (for that were Idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians) and the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven, and not here, it being against the truth of Christ's natural body to be at one time in more places than one.' After so simple and solid a fashion might Sancho

Panza have reasoned had his island estate demanded theological adjudications.

The second mood of the book derives from the early Christians, from the neurotic emotionalism of those dispossessed populations whose passionate zeal first spread abroad the faith. It is possible that the catacomb worshippers caught their tone of religious obsequiousness from their proximity to the Oriental forms of superstitious faith that were concentrated in Rome in the early days of the Empire. To a natural man there will always seem something unhealthy about approaching the mystery of life with a servility so abject. The deity is assumed to respond to the same baits that would appeal to the prayer-maker, who during his devotions transfers to God his own crude psychology—a love of personal glory, a susceptibility to the grossest flattery, and a lively intention to avenge all slights. These early Christians demeaned themselves before God as before the great Cham, and were foolish enough to imagine that it only required the most elementary deceits to catch the attention of that mysterious spirit who ‘spreadest out the heavens like a curtain, Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters : and maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind.’ After the manner of men in a very early state of culture, they implore their God to rouse himself and come to their assistance for the Glory of his name’s sake ; they bewail their manifold sins and wickedness ; they confess themselves as being unworthy ‘so much as to offer sacrifices,’ being nothing—‘vile earth, sinful dust and ashes.’

Certain aspects of Christianity have never been suited to the English temperament, with its congenital thickness of apprehension before subtle spiritual issues. How strange upon our lips sounds the prayer for enlightenment ‘to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity.’ Such Latin sophistries mean little enough to the Squire dozing on his well-worn cushion of red baize, nothing at all to ‘Dairyman Dick—on Sunday Mr. Richard Crick.’ In prayer after prayer notes are struck that are obviously incompatible with the heavy, idiosyncratic complexion of the Englishman’s mind. ‘Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves’—‘We do not presume to come to this thy table’—‘worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness.’ I do not suggest that the English as a race are immune from sin-obsessions. Such states of spiritual disability, however, would

never naturally find an outlet in sanctimonious insincerities. If use and wont had not dulled their attention their sense of good form would be offended, that national helmet of Salvation, under the protection of which all Englishmen conduct their temporal affairs, and with which at the last they fortify themselves against the stare of eternity.

In recapitulation, we find, then, that the ground influence that makes up the spirit of the Prayer Book is English, is the voice of England rising sturdily to the heavens from her counting-houses, from her ships at sea ; rising to heaven from her chalk downs, from her mill-pond meadows, from her manor houses, vicarages, and cobblers' shops ; a law-abiding voice, loyal, uncontinental, reluctant to meddle with change.

The second influence is from early Christian sacerdotalism out of keeping in our opinion with the prevailing religious mood of the country.

What can be said of the third influence ? Below the Prayer Book's insular truculence, below its apostolic casuistry there flows a strong river of pure religion deep as life itself. It is from this deep river of pure religion that men of every faith can draw in their need. Again and again in this singular book can be found the tap-roots of piety in all their first earth strength. In this common service book men can come upon prayers that go down to the very marrow-bone of human flesh, prayers which no one need hesitate to utter, prayers coeternal with mortal life, congenital with that reasoning animal who breathes to live, and who of necessity, from the moment when he leaves the womb, confronts mystery, confronts eternity, confronts God. These prayers can be confused with no petty national preoccupations ; they can be confounded with no pontifical make-believes. For the white man, for the brown man, for the yellow man, and for the black man they have the same high consequence. None can escape from them, none can gainsay them. Their relation is below all creeds, below atheism, out of the reach of human disputation. They are between the dust that is man and the incomprehensible that is God.

How our hearts respond to these elementary cries, to these simple tragic cries incident to our doom. Here is nothing for shame, here are no petty interests, no proselytising designs. From the grass of the fields they rise, from the dry deserts, from the noble sea. It would be possible to compile an anthology of such prayers, of prayers that give expression to this elementary and incontestable



religion. To illustrate my meaning I would suggest certain ones written in that honourable style that belongs only to what is easy to be understood and true.

A prayer to be said each day at the rising and going down of the sun :

‘ We bless thee for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of life.’

A prayer to be said in times of economic depression :

‘ O God, heavenly Father, whose gift it is that the rain doth fall, the earth is fruitful, beasts increase, and fishes do multiply . . . grant that this scarcity and dearth . . . be mercifully changed into cheapness and plenty.’

A prayer to be said in times of sickness and pestilence :

‘ That it will please thee of thy tender mercy . . . to restore the voice of joy and health in our dwellings.’

A prayer to be said in the hour of death and again when the corpse has been made ready to be laid in the earth :

‘ Teach us who survive in this and other like daily spectacles of mortality, to see how frail and uncertain our own condition is. . . . For man that is born of a woman hath but a shadow of time to live, he cometh up and is cut down, like a flower : he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.’

And the most moving prayer of all, a prayer suitable for every sort and condition of mankind, a prayer appropriate to every generation scattered throughout the millenniums ; a prayer plainly applicable to what we are—a breed of aspiring mammals with warm blood in our veins, exultantly, tragically begotten out of the riot of unhallowed matter ; a troop of unstable phantoms, changelings of chaos, Lords of our rabble senses, Lords of our haughty minds, fearfully, awfully alive :

‘ That it may please thee to have mercy upon all men.’

## THE SCAVENGERS.

A TRUE NATURE STORY.

BY H. MORTIMER BATTEN.

### I.

DARKNESS was near, and a rabbit shot through the gate into the great thistle-strewn pasture. He had not gone forty yards when he stopped dead and crouched, ears down, flattened out in the attitude of terror. That act would have cost him his life but for the cock pheasant which followed him. Whether or not it *did* cost him his life, I do not know, because he was one of many; but I doubt it, because he was an *old* rabbit, and the whole pasture was hotching with youngsters, and a rabbit which has lived through one winter is on the highway to living a normal rabbit lifetime, which, in all conscience, is not very long.

As for the cock pheasant, he flew to the top of the gate almost at the rabbit's heels, and sat there ten seconds or more, looking distinctly flustered, but pretending that he was prepared to fight anything which followed, which certainly he was not. His nerves failed, and he fluttered down into the field, alighting slick on top of the flattened rabbit, which evidently he did not see. That brought the rabbit to his senses; it broke his nightmare and brought him back to the actual facts of life. He jumped into the air, taking the pheasant with him—all spurs and huckles—and they parted thankfully. The rabbit ran on, and kept on running. He passed half-way across the pasture, sticking to the hollows like a hunted hare, while the pheasant ran off with all the dignity he could muster, keeping a weather eye behind him.

Another ten seconds went by, and it would have taken keen eyes to see the next to pass through the gate, because the light was already gone, the seed grass was tall, and the thing which came did not run in the ordinary sense. It streaked, it rocketed, it shot up the field by the way the rabbit had gone, and so far as rabbits were concerned, its name was Death. One could see that much at the merest vanishing glimpse—a little Death Hound, its black-tipped tail bushed out like a bottle brush, a veritable hornet of the lesser animal world, but the thistle stems and the seed grass claimed him.

Overhead the woodcock pinwheeled and grunted on their circular excursions from the spruce forest which bordered the pasture. It was a still, sultry night, and the swamp lands below were full of bird voices—the creaking and croaking of the gulls, the ‘chick-chock’ of the snipe, the persistent note of the redshanks, and the long-drawn, mournful twee-twee of the sandpipers. But night had really come now, though there was every indication that it would be one of those restless nights, so far as Wild Nature was concerned.

## II.

The man who lived in the wooden bungalow under the shadow of the spruce woods and overlooking the wide thistle pasture, was seated on his balcony, enjoying the last pipe of the day, his dog beside him, when that familiar sound—the plaintive squealing of a young rabbit—came from the stone dyke only a few yards away. So his dog went to investigate, and seeing, after a moment, that he was hunting something, the man also got up. As he reached the point where the dog was, a stoat streaked across the path almost at his feet, and reaching the mossy bank sat up to look at him, cutting a pretty picture of alert woodland life. Similarly a second stoat shot through the nettles, while a third inside the wall was chattering abuse at the dog. So the man knew that a pack of them had arrived, and he called his dog and went in for the night, quite well satisfied at the turn of events.

As a matter of fact several months had elapsed since he had seen a stoat in that vicinity, but rabbits—rabbits!—the whole hillside had become overrun by them! Moreover, owing to their abundance, they were not healthy rabbits, for Dame Nature had stepped in, as she always does. Some of those rabbits were blind, others hunched and hairless, victims of the common scourge, and so far as its rabbit population was concerned, the locality needed a thorough cleaning up, and to-night it looked like getting it.

The man was a light sleeper—rather he had acquired the gift of listening while he slept; which he did with his door and his windows open, and—yes, that was to prove an active night!

## III.

One pack of stoats? If there was one pack there were half a dozen packs hunting the thistle pasture. As I say, not a stoat had been seen for months past. The keepers and rabbit-catchers said that distemper had wiped them out over the whole country—

side, but that I doubt. They had simply gone, as the wolves go, as other pack hunters go for a time, but sooner or later they return—not in ones or twos, but in a wave of invasion. And a stoat does not wait to choose the fittest of its prey. When out to kill where killing is so easy, he strikes left and right, like a rattlesnake fighting fire, and the diseased, the disabled, the weak, are the first to fall.

The man who lived in the bungalow had seen enough of diseased rabbits, and genuinely wished the scourge would burn itself out. His garden and outbuildings were full of the wretched bunnies, creeping everywhere for warmth and shelter. For weeks past his dog had killed several every day, and he was afraid lest the dog itself might suffer, though fortunately rabbits seem to keep their ailments to themselves.

Across the pasture rang the squealing of another bunny going west, and ere it had died a second chimed in. For a minute there was silence, then again that thin-edged plaintive cry from another part of the field, and—my stars, the starless night was alive with them!

But that was nothing compared with what occurred in the wee, sma' hours. Whether or not the man slept lightly, he was suddenly wakened by a squealing and a bumping under his very bunk. His dog was very much alive, and in his drowsiness it took some minutes for him to realise that the disturbance was under his bungalow—the floor between him and it. So far as one could judge, living Cain was taking place under that floor, but he restrained his dog from its anxiety to join in, and for ten minutes he sat, his hand on the dog's head, listening to the squealing and bumping and scratching under his very feet.

In time it ceased, and he and his dog went back to their beds, but out in the field civil war, or something akin to it, was going on. The hunting of the stoats had, judging from the night noises which filled the air, gathered half the population of the glen to that place. Peewits shrieked, a curlew tore the affrighted atmosphere, a brace of piebald oyster-catchers cut rings through the night, but worst of all the long-eared owls had gathered in from the spruce woods, and their ghostly churring and chattering predominated the pandemonium with the sounds of death. Among furred and feathered things, the owls are about the only ones who can put the fear of Death into the heart of a stoat, and if the rabbits had death at their heels, it occurred to the man at the bungalow that the killers

too would need to keep a weather eye open for foes of their own.

Ere the first grey streak of dawn crept over the shoulder of the range behind the bungalows, the rain began to fall, and all sound was lost in the general deluge. Through the open doors and the windows of the bungalow a cool and scented breeze wafted, so the man got up and closed the door, and he and his dog slept soundly at last.

When they awoke the clean and smiling day filled the valley—the scent of moist bracken and of the pine-woods refreshed, and it did not take him long to learn that the rabbit scourge—the dread disease with its wake of blind and feeble—was finished. The little russet hunters had cleared the air—had restored wild nature, so far as the rabbits were concerned, to its proper and healthy level, and thus there came to him yet another understanding—that though man may require an unbalanced order, a superabundance of one kind and a scarcity of another; though the true balance of nature is impossible in a settled and artificial country, yet there are times when man must lay down his arms and leave Nature to refind her own balance. If things get too bad, let the country go wild for a bit and it will clear itself up, and on the whole it left him with the thought that if the weasels—the deadliest enemies of game preservation—were to go, it would be a sad day for those who preserve game.

But there is no likelihood of their going, though admittedly they were gone from that area next day, since when several weeks have elapsed, and never a stoat has been seen. That period was punctuated by only one incident—when the man in the bungalow had to commission a small boy to creep under the floor to ascertain the cause of the aroma which was filtering through the boards, and from under the floor the small boy produced four dead rabbits, one dead rat, a snake, and two toads.



## TWO SONNETS.

## THE SEARCH.

'COME, let us go beyond the paths of earth,  
 Love-crowned into the sunlight, you and I,  
 Where everlasting Truth is brought to birth,  
 Where knowledge shines undimmed!'

Such was my cry:

So turned we proudly from the tortuous ways  
 Where blind ones wandering groped toward their god,  
 And steadfast through the long turmoil of days  
 Trod hand in hand upon a lonely road.

Dim-eyed we go beneath a darkening sky,  
 Into the night: toward the distant plain  
 A crimson sun is sinking silently,  
 And we are old: yet Beauty, born of pain,  
 Pale-shining lights along the shade to die  
 The tired hearts that sought for Truth in vain.

## A LEAVE-TAKING.

Go, bear him children; and when flaming lust  
 Must sink time-wearied in slow-fading fire,  
 When he creeps palely to the oblivious dust  
 Where sleeps the frail-spun dream of my desire:  
 When love's a misted memory, dimly seen  
 Across the darkened valleys of dead years;  
 And you live dry-eyed, patient while serene  
 Grey sadness smooths the bitter tide of tears;

Then think on me, whose tired heart shall find  
 The timeless sleep of immemorial kings  
 Long lapped insentient in eternal night:  
 Think on our love, and unforgotten things:  
 Sleep soft, and pass upon the barren wind  
 Dreaming the golden days of our delight.

MICHAEL ASQUITH.

## THROUGH THE NIGHT.

BY G. M. N. RAMSAY.

WHEN they had all gone, and at last I was alone, I sat down by the fireside. A bright fire burned on the hearth, made up by the friend who had been last to go, who had been so loth to go. But I was beyond human comfort; the hearth by which I sat was cold, the dead ashes only stirred by the wind which blew in gusts down the chimney or in at the broken window and open door.

My hearth was cold. This fire, those curtained windows, that door, shut by the last departing guest—these all I saw as from a great way off. They were not mine. That fire could not warm me, those curtains could not keep out the cold; my door from henceforth lay open, swinging. There was nothing within the house to protect from thieves; there was no one to cherish and to guard from the wind and rain without.

'Earth to earth.' How idle to build a house, to make it secure without, beautiful and comfortable within—a house such as this one I see a great way off in my dream—to shelter that which came out of dust, and which shall to dust return! It is pitiful.

It is an offence, an irony.

No, it is not pitiful. There is no pity in my heart for those who build. They are blind, foolish, ignorant. Every day they see dust returning to dust; yet do they build for those they love houses to stand long after their children's children are dust. They furnish them, and joyfully arrange their treasures in them unmindful of the end. See that cupboard there: it holds a wedding wreath worn one hundred years ago; it holds a curl cut from the head which to-day has been returned to earth.

In a little while it will be swept out and dusted; and fresh fools will lock in it their wedding wreaths, their locks of hair.

Fools. To be despised, not pitied.

Those we love? I know not love. My heart is cold as the hearth by which I sit.

What men call love is like this phantom fire which I see as from a great way off—an unreal shadowy thing; its warmth is

as the warmth of children clinging to each other in the cold and darkness, when each is warmed by the other's clinging.

Oh fools, let us grow cold at once and have it over ! Let not joy and beauty warm your hearts lest the darkness which comes after slay you altogether.

*Slay ?* Life is not so kind as to slay. Else were I also dead with him I loved, who was my life.

I also loved. I was among the fools. That is why I know wisdom and folly. I knew the rapture, the agony, the delight of living. Nothing of that has power to move me now. I look back on those years as one may look through a dusty picture-book.

Foolish, glorious years ; full of untruths, of deceits. Did I not fancy in those far times (if indeed it *was* I) that when this night came, if it should ever incredibly come, I should weep and cry, that my heart would burn with love and sorrow, that I should rage with grief ? That the sight of all the little things among which our common life was spent would be an agony ?

The night has come and I feel none of these things. My heart is a stone. The little things mean nothing to me, not even the lock of hair in the cupboard. My house lies open to all the winds that blow while I sit by a cold and empty hearth.

The phantom fire burns low. Soon it will be cold and silent too. Will Death come soon and give me sleep ? I have done with life.

Slowly the darkness gathered ; the embers fell together, flickered up and then there was silence.

The phantom house which was not mine—the phantom fire faded and I was left undisturbed in the home I knew as mine with the ashes long cold upon the hearth, the window broken, the door swinging heavily on its hinges.

I said : ' It is well. This is my home till Death shall come to release me, to lead me to the sleep from which there is no waking.' And I found a sort of peace in the dull banging of the unlatched door.

Darkness, utter darkness. Time itself seemed to stop. ' It is the end,' I said, ' now I know. It is the end.' The words drummed in my head to the dull thudding of the door.

Did I sleep at last ? For a voice from without startled me, though it was low.

'Is there shelter within?' said the voice; and the door ceased its banging as though a hand held it, waiting for an answer. The night air blew in cold. Half-awakened, and thinking that it was Death waiting at the threshold, as I had seen him in pictures, I roused myself to say:

'Enter, friend.'

I turned toward the door in sudden foolish hope.

But it was only an old man. I heard his shuffling footsteps and I could see the outline of his figure as he stooped and entered. The night must have turned towards day.

'Who calls me friend?' said the old man, 'and I a stranger to this house? I thank you for your welcome.'

He stood and looked at me questioning.

'I was expecting a friend,' I answered, 'and thought you might be he. But sit down if you find shelter or comfort in this cold house.'

'I will,' said the old man, 'for I lead a wandering life and rarely find a welcome.'

He sat down, drawing his cloak about him and about the bundle he carried.

I looked at him curiously. So old he was, his face deeply seamed by sorrow, how had he still life in him left to travel the roads? Was his heart still alive that a welcome could matter to him? As I gazed, wondering, he looked up and his eyes pierced me with a sudden burning pain.

It was my fancy, for as I looked again his eyes held only the mild light of old age, though I felt myself trembling as from a shock.

'You have lived here long?' said the old man.

'It is my home,' I answered. 'My old home I scarcely remember, it is so far away.'

'You are content with it?' He moved in his chair, shifting his bundle to an easier position.

'Yes,' I said. 'I am content to wait here till my friend come.'

The thoughts within me sprang into words as if of their own accord.

'And then?'

He must have swung the door wide open, for it no longer banged; and the chill wind of dawn swept through the house.

A trembling seized me again, as from a sudden pain at my heart.

'Then,' I answered, crushing down the strange new pain—  
'then he will lead me out to the place of eternal sleep.'

The old man bent over the bundle he carried; it seemed to me he held it very tenderly.

What was there so familiar in his attitude as he sat between me and the faint grey light? What recollections stirred within me, dimly yet disturbingly?

'Two ways lead from this house,' he said after a while, 'but neither of them lead where you would go. One of them leads back to the home you scarce remember; where sleep wanders among men, comforting, bewildering; throwing dust in their eyes.'

I shuddered and shook my head.

'That sleep is a torturer,' I said; 'for after it comes waking. What of the other road?'

He looked at me, and again fierce pain shot through me. Last night I thought I had done with pain.

'Not there will you find what you seek.' He looked at me with pity, though his voice was stern. It seemed to me that he waited watching me.

It was the way he had gathered his cloak about him. I remembered suddenly. It was only that it reminded me of the ancient attitude of the mother with her child. What a foolish fancy! Yet the remembrance stabbed like a sword.

'Not there either,' he said, 'for each is a road of adventure. Here alone is the house of sleep.'

'Is there then no Death?' I cried aloud in my agony. 'No kind deliverer?' Pain leapt up within me like a flame scorching me.

'You would forget all?' he said gently.

In a flash it all came back to me: love—sorrow—desolation; I strove with the agony in my heart.

'The dawn is breaking,' he said as though to himself. He rose and took my hand; and his grip burned with a flame which rushed to meet the fire which scorched me within. It was as the pain of the ice-bound rivers when the thaw comes; the pain of the trees when the sap begins to flow after the long winter; the pain of the spirit bursting its garment of flesh; of life returning to the frozen heart.

'You are already on the threshold,' he said, and as he spoke he led me through the low doorway, still holding my hand in his strong and terrible grasp.



'The light! The light!' I was bewildered, blinded, for it was almost day. In the dark house I had not known dawn was so near.

The wide land lay before us, moor and hill and valley suffused with light, waiting in solemn expectation. Each blade of grass, each leaf, each twig held a drop of dew, shining with light reflected from the clear sky.

Everything was held in a great silence; yet a silence bursting with speech.

I held my breath, and in stillness the light grew. As I gazed, tears rose, blinding me; and I knew that they were tears of joy. For lo! the pain had gone.

I turned to the old man beside me.

But there was no old man. There was only a little child playing in the grass.

I looked behind me and there was no house; only long shadows flying, for in that moment the sun rose over the hills, flooding earth and sky with radiant light.

Only we two—the child and I—among the hills, with the morning shadows trembling on the grass. As I watched him, wondering, the child looked up at me and laughed for sheer joy. (Surely I had forgotten how beautiful a child is!)

I held out my hand to him smiling; the night had gone with all its pain and terror.

The sun was streaming into my room in the old world when I awoke. My friend stood there watching me anxiously.

'It's all right,' I said. 'Life waits on the threshold of Death. Now I know.'

'You have slept here all night?' said my friend.

'No,' I said, rejoicing. 'I have awakened.'

## IN THE VALLEY OF THE OURE.

BY SUSAN RADCLIFFE.

IN the year A.D. 692, a company of twelve adventurous Englishmen set sail from Ireland—where they had found refuge during a period of storm and stress in their own country—filled with a burning desire to bring Christianity to the wild heathen tribes of Central Europe. Sailing round Britain, they made their way to France, and arrived without mishap at the court of King Pepin, who received the band of travel-stained adventurers very graciously, and sent them into the wilds of Friesland and along the banks of the Rhine to preach to the heathen tribes he had himself lately conquered.

Few of that gallant little company left any trace behind them which can be recognised to-day as theirs; though who can tell what lovely fruits of Christianity may not still be springing from seed sown by their forgotten hands so long ago? Some of their number were martyred by the heathen they attempted to convert almost before they had had time to preach to them, while others lived out long lives of strenuous endeavour, and saw Christianity in blossom before they died. The best known among these latter was St. Willibrod (or Wilbrord, as Bede calls him), who, after preaching in Friesland and the surrounding countries for many years, made a pilgrimage to Rome at the desire of King Pepin, where he was consecrated Bishop by the Pope and given the town of Utrecht for his episcopal see. Willibrod ordained many priests among his fellow-countrymen who had followed him to Friesland, 'Some of whom,' says Bede, 'are now departed in our Lord; but Wilbrord himself is still living, venerable for old age, having been thirty-six years a Bishop, and sighing after the rewards of the heavenly life, after the many spiritual conflicts which he has waged.' The memory of those spiritual conflicts and strange adventures among the heathen, which to Bede were vivid tales of his own time, has long ago faded out of men's minds, and Willibrod is to us a forgotten name; but there is one small corner of Europe where his victories over the powers of darkness are remembered still.

Not many English people explore the Duchy of Luxemburg,

though it is an enchanting little kingdom : a fairy-tale country of wild hills and valleys, woods and meadows, rocks and ruined castles, where the fortunate may hear, above the voices of the rivers, the song of Mélusine the water-nymph (as lovely yet as when Sigefroid, Count of Luxemburg, fell in love with her centuries ago), or catch a glimpse of Freia, goddess of spring, the Persephone of the north, who, as the year awakens out of winter, still visits what were once her sacred groves in the valley of the Oure, and is sometimes seen by the country folk at dusk or dawn, sitting among the trees, a vision of immortal youth and beauty. There is one little town, whose magnificent ruined castle dominates the valley, where the river Oure flows

‘Quite through the streets, with silver sound,’

and where in May the hills are so virginally lovely with cherry-blossom, and so gay with all the streams that rush through the woods and steep, flowery meadows—each one singing its own song as it comes, so that the air is filled with the sound of many waters—that one cannot but believe that here is, in truth, the haunt of some such immortal beings as Freia and Mélusine.

The Oure valley, however, though always beautiful, in its further recesses wears a fierce air ; the ruined castles among its dark rocks look, as indeed they are, like the forsaken eyries of human birds of prey, who were as merciless in their day to the victims in their power as are the falcons, which now nest in the ruins, to the little birds of the countryside. But the entrance to the valley is peaceful and smiling. The river flows through sheets of marsh-marigolds and cuckoo-flowers, and the village, which is perched on a rocky promontory above the meadows, is, in spite of its unfamiliar situation, curiously reminiscent of England, and seems enwrapped in a peace which is far removed from the atmosphere of fierce pride and magnificence which broods over the ruins but a little higher up the valley. Here is no robber-castle, but only a semi-fortified farmhouse (once a community of the Knights Templar), some small cottages, and an ancient, stumpy little church, which brings an irresistible thought of home to an English traveller. Little churches like this, often of Saxon foundation, are a familiar sight in England, but it is unexpected to find one among the hills of Luxemburg. When the traveller leaves the village and sets out on the road that leads to the great castle, he finds another curious thing. Carved in relief on the rocky face of the hillside is a modern

sculpture of Faith, Hope and Charity. It has no explanation attached to it, and the puzzled traveller may rack his brains in vain to think of any reason why it should have been placed in such an apparently inappropriate spot. But a reason there is, which explains both the sculptured figures and the English air of the little church, and it is one that travels all the way back to the seventh century and the 'spiritual conflicts' of St. Willibrod.

Wandering through forests and over hills, in constant danger from the barbarians who inhabited the rocky fastnesses of what is now Luxemburg, Willibrod, always an adventurous soul, arrived one day in the valley of the Oure. A wild valley even now, it was wild indeed then, the home not only of a fierce people, but also, as many a legend tells, of evil spirits and the powers of darkness. But Willibrod, armed with his faith in God, did not shrink from any conflict, whether with evil men or spirits; and, settling down for a time in the valley, he preached so fervently of Christ to the people that many of them forsook the dark rites of their heathen gods and were baptised. Remembering the little churches that were springing up in England when he left it, Willibrod built one for his flock on the promontory at the entrance to the valley; and there it stands to this day, still, in spite of all the alterations time has brought, as homelike to English eyes as it must have been to his who first built it, and still retaining the atmosphere of peace and goodness he spent his life in bringing to a wild and savage race. As for the evil spirits, when he found they were troubling the minds of his converts, Willibrod called on the power of God to sweep the country clear of them and bind them fast in hell; and, in token of their banishment, he carved, with lovely symbolism, the figures of Faith, Hope and Charity on the rocks just beyond his newly built church, so that the people might always remember what powers they were which had set them free.

For eleven centuries Willibrod's allegorical figures remained on the rocks, and the tale of the banishment of the devils remained as a legend in the minds of the people, who grew to regard the sculpture, now battered and weather-worn, as a kind of talisman which protected the countryside from evil; but the events which changed it to its present form make a strange ending to its story.

Some time during the nineteenth century, when the French overran Luxemburg during one of their wars (a habit of the bigger European nations which Luxemburg has always had to bear), it chanced that Willibrod's figures, which had survived the storms

and battles of so many centuries, were hit by a shot from a French gun and shattered to pieces beyond hope of restoration. Imagine the distress of the people of the valley to find the ancient guardians of their peace destroyed! Superstition sprang instantly to life, and terrifying tales were spread from house to house of how the evil spirits, banished by Willibrod, but now no longer kept at bay by those watchful figures, had regained possession of the valley, and had been met in horrible forms wandering up and down. One, in particular, in the shape of a huge black dog with fiery eyes, was seen and heard, night after night, galloping over the hills and down the valley, so that the frightened people dared not venture out of doors after dark had fallen. Their fears grew to such a height that at last they petitioned the Government to send someone to carve the guardian figures on the rocks again. In that unsophisticated corner of the world no one laughed at them. An artist was sent, under his hand the sculpture sprang once more into being in its ancient place, and the simple-minded country-folk were again able to walk abroad without fear of meeting evil spirits by the way.

So it is that, in spite of the vicissitudes of time, Willibrod's little church and the figures of Faith, Hope and Charity still companion one another in their watch over the valley of the Oure, forming a link between Luxemburg and England which is more than twelve centuries old, and a lovely memorial to one of the first of our own race to take his life in his hand and venture into heathen lands for the love of God.



## EXCHANGE VALUES.

BY HUMFREY JORDAN.

'THAT's the bathroom,' Bob Martin told his guest, pointing across a yard to a shed. 'And go easy with the shower because the water is lower in the tanks than I like it. Give me a shout when you've finished.'

'Right,' Austen Overley agreed, 'I take it you don't dress?'

'Meaning a boiled shirt?' his host asked, his deep-sunk blue eyes twinkling. 'No. It doesn't go with Maria and the chops. A gleaming shirt-front at tea would just about bring Maria out in a rash.'

As Overley stepped into a zinc bath and pulled a chain which let a not too vigorous spray of curiously smelling luke-warm water run over him he was not in a good temper.

Up to this point the round of visits to Australian homesteads on which Marston and Stenson, the branch managers of Overleys at Melbourne and Sydney, had combined to insist had gone very well. In a series of large and comfortable houses he had been treated as a director of the great firm of Overleys, the son of its millionaire founder, and a young man of ability should be treated. He did not expect positive results from these visits: that he had told the two managers. He expected a pleasant holiday. And they had sent him, even insisted on sending him, to this zinc bath!

Martin, the notes supplied him with his letters of introduction had informed him, was a descendant of one of the oldest families of squatters. At one time he had held a regular commission in an English lancer regiment. He had fought in the Boer War and the Great War, and was a most interesting fellow.

Overley had come some distance out of his way to meet this interesting fellow. He had left a home where he had been very comfortable, and had driven a hundred and twenty miles over roads which, he had imagined, would shake his yellow car to pieces. A north wind, which shrivelled his skin and covered him, filling his eyes and ears and hair, with fine dust, had blown all day. Towards evening he had topped a hill and obtained a very wide view. Within the limits of the view there was only one dwelling, his destination, Martin's house Naroo. There could be no mistake about it: he had not lost his way and there was no alternative. But, viewed

from a hill-top a mile or two away, the place did not look a house at all, it seemed a shack and a poor one at that. Overley, who liked comfort and seldom parted from it, was discouraged at this first view of his night's lodging. He was more discouraged at a closer sight of it, positively staggered at his meeting with his host.

At the bottom of the hill, from whose top he had seen Naroo, he had stopped his car to enquire his way to the house. A little way off the broad stock road a small man was peering at something in a clump of scrubby trees. Experience had taught Overley that men, small or large, were rare in that countryside, so he had stopped the car and shouted. The small man had started, obligingly, to walk towards the car, smiling and waving a hand. He wore ancient grey flannel trousers, the inevitable belt, and an open-necked khaki shirt; he looked both hot and dirty and had the appearance of a retired jockey. With him across the still, clear, evening air came the most appalling stench.

'I'd heard about that yellow car of yours,' the small man called, when he got within fifty yards. 'Thought I'd come and meet you. See you didn't try the wrong way up to the house. Trouble for a car if you do. Good things those fly traps.' He jerked his hand towards the clump of scrubby trees. 'Stink, don't they? But that one is just about giving a battalion of the little devils colic. Pleased to meet you, Overley. Good of you to look me up.'

As the start of a visit to an ex-cavalry officer it struck Overley as appalling. With the ragged little man chatting beside him and the car bounding over what he supposed the owner called a drive, he began to look forward to after breakfast next morning, when he saw himself departing, with much relief.

The Naroo homestead or, as Overley thought of it, the shack itself was an oblong wood and tin structure with a verandah running along one side. Before it was a small lawn, vividly green, fringed on three sides with borders bright with flowers beyond which was a hedge of tamarisk. In drawing his visitor's attention to this plot Martin had announced that he could not live without flowers and that his cannas were famous. Behind the shack were outbuildings, a couple of hundred yards or so to the north the wool-shed. All that Overley could find in favour of the small groups of tin-roofed buildings was that they seemed strangely tidy and in good repair and that their situation half-way up a hillside was pleasing.

Putting the yellow car away in an open shed Overley was distinctly anxious. This tattered little person with his faint Aus-

tralian accent and his complete ease of manner he could manage to stand for a few hours, but any female belongings promised to be pretty impossible. So he learned with considerable relief that his host's wife was away in England and that the children, two he gathered, were away at school. That fortunate escape enabled him to look upon the interior of the shack with calmness. It was neat and clean and it had furniture in it ; that, at a first glance, was about as far as Overley was prepared to go ; he would not admit that it was furnished. He was given a drink of very cool beer in a sort of central living-room from which all the other rooms opened and then taken by, unless his senses deceived him, a house-proud host to a bedroom that might have measured as much as ten feet by eight.

When he was letting the curious-smelling water in the bathroom run over him with the knowledge that shortly he was to eat chops at a meal described as tea, Overley let his thoughts dwell with Messrs. Marston and Stenson. If they imagined that sending him to a place of this sort was a good joke, they were due for a surprise. Branch managers with an indecent sense of humour needed sharp lessons and would get them.

At tea Martin wore an almost new pair of grey flannel trousers and a clean shirt but, as the evening was hot, he did not wear a coat. He drank tea with his chops, but gave his guest the choice of whisky or beer. The amazing thing, to Overley, about him was that he seemed thoroughly delighted at entertaining a man whom he knew to be heir to the Overley millions and altogether satisfied with the quality of the entertainment offered. Maria, the maid of all work, although she showed no signs of breaking out into a rash, was obviously in a very bad temper. It struck Overley, and he registered the sally in his mind for future repetition, that she was not a woman who cared for entertainment on the grand scale.

During the meal Overley contented himself with listening politely to his host, talking as little as he need. Martin, he learned with disguised amazement, had with the aid of a boy built the house himself and regarded it as a pleasant home. He owned, free of encumbrances, some three thousand acres of surrounding land and in spite of difficult times was doing reasonably well out of it. Able, anyhow, to send his wife for a visit to England and his two boys to a school which, Overley gathered from the way the fellow talked of it, must be the local Eton. Mixed in with this autobiography were the names of many of the influential people whom Overley had met in Australia ; and invariably Martin referred to

them by their Christian or their nicknames and frequently he described them as having, on some occasion or other, just about broken out in a rash or had colic. Overley had to acquit his shirt-sleeved host of any snobbishness of manner, but he could not swallow the idea that the little man was on boon companion terms with half the people of note in Australia. He imagined that Martin, having once in his days in the cavalry mixed with people of importance, liked to delude himself into fancying that his life had not altogether carried him past such acquaintance. That, and Martin's obvious satisfaction in his performance as a small farmer, led Overley to change his tactics when, after tea, they sat in the dark on the plot of lawn and were consumed by mosquitoes and midges. From a listener he became a talker. He set out to show that between a cocky farmer in the wilds of Australia and a man destined to control millions in the city of London there was a considerable gulf.

To avoid giving offence to the peculiar little person whose hospitality he was receiving, Overley used tact. But to point the lesson he chose the method of describing the scenes and the persons with whom he was familiar at home. Martin showed as much pleasure and eagerness in this talk as he had in his own. His familiarity with many of the scenes which Overley described was obviously genuine; and he actually laid claim to acquaintance with some of the persons. He began to ask questions with enthusiasm. It became apparent that the little cocky farmer seated in his shirt-sleeves on his carefully watered plot of grass in the mosquito-infested southern night had once been familiar with people of position in England. The fellow was not bluffing. An English duke, referred to casually and artlessly as Tommy, had given Martin the pipe which he was smoking. That Overley found it impossible to disbelieve. So he changed his tactics again. When they had been driven by the mosquitoes into the central living-room, he opened the subject of big business.

That was not a success. He realised, with annoyance, that his host was neither impressed nor interested in talk of millions. The little man listened politely, but that was all.

'Finance gets past me,' he apologised. 'It's probably ignorance, but I'm not able to see where the financier pulls his weight in the world.'

Determined to impress Martin somehow, Overley turned the talk to the army. He saw a chance there of getting in one or two digs at a man who scorned financiers. But he was not given the

chance. Martin admitted that he had fought in the Boer War, like many of his kind, that he had served in the regular cavalry in Egypt and India, but had given up his commission as too expensive. He had, of course, he said, gone back to the army in 1914. When questions about the army and war were put to him, he would answer them briefly with obvious reluctance. Soldiering, it appeared, was something he would not discuss with a man who had never been a soldier. He refused war talk with someone who did not know war. Overley began to take a mild interest in the fellow. He was obviously a failure, a man who had had the chance of living a life other than that of a cabbage and had let the chance slip. Yet, since he refused to be impressed by a guest of consequence or to show the slightest regret at having allowed the chances of his life to slip by, Overley determined to fill in time, until he could reasonably go to bed and get the ghastly evening over, by finding out what lay at the back of the little man's complacency and his complete satisfaction in his own tin-pot position. When Martin produced whisky, Overley sought to draw him out with talk about Australia.

That succeeded. Martin liked to talk about his country, though he criticised it more freely than any other Australian Overley had heard. He talked well, too, sketching outlines of problems without waste of words, making his points firmly, insisting on answers. When, about ten-thirty, Overley thought he could suggest bed, he also thought that the acquaintance had reached a stage when he could ask a question that might really succeed in impressing his host, in forcing the fellow to realise the gulf between them.

'I wonder,' he said, helping himself to a final drink, 'that you don't want to enlarge your sphere somewhat. Take an active part in public life, for instance.'

Martin gave his guest a quick smile; and the smile annoyed Overley. He read into it that the little man had been waiting for that question all the evening and considered it silly. But the spoken answer to it was careful.

'No politics for me,' Martin explained. 'This contents me. After trying other lives I've found I want to make a job of this one. I've got real squatter blood in me.'

On that note of absurdity, for the fellow spoke as though squatter and royal blood might be considered of equal importance, Overley went to bed. Martin, seeing him into his room, made a pronouncement.

'I'll bring you a cup of tea,' he said, 'around six-fifteen and



we'll have a look-see before breakfast. Show you the squatter reaction at work. Give me a shout—I'm next door—if you haven't got all you want.'

Overley refrained from saying that, if he treated the last request seriously, he would be shouting all night; he was anxious to finish the evening and as quickly as possible pass the time in sleep. He was not due at his next house of call the following day, but he was quite determined to move on from Naroo in the morning. If necessary he would pass the next night at an hotel in some neighbouring town, or he might, once clear of Naroo, telephone and see whether he could put forward his next visit. Around six-fifteen he was to be called! No choice apparently in the matter. A civilised person might regard the hour as indecent, but a host with squatter blood in him ordered, neither more nor less, his guest to study bucolic reactions at that ungodly time. They would stare at sheep and consider crops gravely, that seemed inevitable. The little man would demonstrate his fantastic conviction that he was the equal if not the superior of his guest. That was comic, but it was also annoying. Overley got into bed and blew out the Stone Age illumination in the form of a candle. The mattress seemed to be stuffed with specimens of local rock. All he wanted! One thing he wanted was a word with Messrs. Stenson and Marston. But before he slept he determined that somehow in the morning he would finally dispose of his host's delusions about equality. That absurdity did annoy him.

The agricultural demonstration next morning was more uncomfortable than Overley had anticipated. The horse he rode objected, at times strenuously, to the rider's hands; the fact that he was unable to improve his hands or leave the horse's mouth alone was annoying to a man determined to demonstrate superiority. Host and guest rode, mostly at a walk, over bare, rolling, sun-cracked country, from one large paddock of dry grass to another. Martin, since Overley was busy riding, did most of the talking.

They stopped to look at shorn sheep, they appraised growing wheat, they visited wells and stinking fly traps. All the time Martin, his face eager and absorbed, poured forth talk which to Overley seemed the smallest of small beer. How this was good land, how that was not, how a search, successful after many failures, had been made for water there, how people had said that this land would not grow wheat but how it did grow fifteen bushels to the acre in an average year. That and the like, while Overley, angry

with himself, wondered what he could do to make the prehistoric means of transport which he bestrode walk instead of dance. Then what the speaker obviously intended for a grand and impressive finale was delivered as they halted on a rocky outcrop above the shack. Squatter number one, grandfather Martin, had gradually broken in, tamed and acquired that countryside. Squatter number two, father Martin, had inherited the tamed and acquired countryside; to his inheritance he added the acquirement of a wide vision and a taste for gambling. The wide vision took him frequently to Melbourne and Sydney; the taste for gambling he satisfied with losing horses and wild cat stock. The crash came a week or two before his death; the acquired countryside went to creditors. Squatter number three, son Martin, came back to squat on a corner of the countryside. He had no vision of reacquiring the whole: that he made quite plain. But, with his grandfather's blood in him, he set out to make a living from that land. Fortune-making was not in the picture; the experiment was designed to prove, and was said to be proving, that a man of intelligence could find a reasonable competence and independence from the land, that he could go farther, find in it the interest that brings content.

Overley, since his horse was standing still, paid attention to the peroration, but it did not impress him.

'Good enough, isn't it?' Martin asked, waving his hand in a sweep towards a wide view of rolling brown country, clear and hard in the sunshine, meeting the edge of the sky in a remote haze of blue hills. 'I grow wool and wheat and the growing is always presenting difficulties which are not easy to overcome. It's a life right enough.'

Overley looked away from the shimmering miles of rolling brown; the glare hurt his eyes. Below him Maria was hanging clothes, Martin's shirts and, presumably, her own knickers, on a line behind the shack. Rather more in the picture that, Overley considered, than wide open spaces talk by a failure and the son of a failure.

'Bit too lonely for me,' he smiled. 'Don't you ever get tired of it, Martin?'

The little man's eyes puckered.

'Don't you ever get tired of the office where the millions are made?' he retorted. 'I never expected to convince you, though.' He pointed towards the horizon. 'Burning on a biggish front, isn't she? Thank God, we've missed them here so far this summer.'

Overley looked in the direction indicated by his host, but a trail

of smoke did not interest him. He murmured politely. What did interest him to the extent of annoying him excessively was that, apparently, there was no means of convincing this absurd little man that in the scheme of things the guest counted but the host did not at all.

To his disgust Overley was not decently able to make his escape from Naroo until after a midday meal which was taken at noon, and then he had to tell a lot of lies. When, at last, the yellow car bounced down the execrable drive he was thankful at the prospect of never seeing either Martin or the shack again. His road branched off the main stock route some three miles south of Naroo and climbed a low but steep range of hills. The gradient in one place was very bad and the surface vile; the car boiled. At the top of the climb Overley stopped to let her cool down. He got out and smoked a cigarette. Looking back the way he had come he could not see Naroo. He was glad of that; it convinced him that he had done with the place. But it annoyed him that he could not get Martin and his absurd assurance of equality, if it were not assurance of superiority, out of his mind.

The car having cooled down sufficiently, he threw away his cigarette and drove on.

But in the afternoon heat he was getting uncomfortably drowsy. He fought his drowsiness for half an hour; then at sight of a straggling clump of red gum-trees it defeated him. He drove the car into the shade; got into the back seat; and slept. It was after half-past five when stiff, with a nasty taste in his mouth and in a very bad temper, he awoke. Instead of being at the country town, to which he was making, in time for a cup of tea he would not be there till after dark. It was most annoying. He had intended inspecting the local hotel while he took his tea and, if it were not to his liking, ringing up his prospective host and finding out whether he could be received that night. Now he would have to hurry, and he disliked being hurried. He drove on cursing himself, and the whole episode of his visit to Naroo. As the dusk fell he noticed the reflection of fire in the sky, but it seemed behind him the other side of the range of hills where the car had boiled and, anyhow, he was not interested in fires. Where he would dine and sleep was his immediate and pressing concern.

The country town, when he arrived there after dark, seemed a deserted sort of village. The hotel, its dark exterior singularly unpromising, was at one end of the broad main street. Overley,

as he stopped the car opposite the entrance, could not imagine himself sleeping in such a place but assumed that it could supply him with a meal and a telephone. The door was ajar; he pushed it open and stepped into a dark passage that smelled stuffily. On the right of the passage the door of the bar was half-open. Overley as he paused, sniffing in disgust, could see a zinc counter with bottles on shelves behind and a swinging oil lamp above. The barman stood in front of the shelves, wiping glasses, opposite to him with his elbows on the counter and his back towards Overley was a customer who from his begrimed appearance seemed to be a chimney-sweep or a coal-heaver, tired after a hard day's work.

'And what does Bob Martin say?' the barman asked.

At the mention of his late host's name Overley obeyed an instinct and stood still in the dark passage listening; and afterwards he thanked fortune that he had done so.

'Say!' the grimy and tired customer replied, 'mighty little. He looks at the bonfire that had been the homestead, and jerks back his head. You know his way, Sam. "Well, boys," he says, "there doesn't seem to be any sense in wasting more time on that. My home has gone and that's all there is to it. Maria can have a look round the ashes when they've cooled down. However, we must improve the staff work before it gets to the next homestead." And he sends me off with the car to fetch a full load of helpers. This is my fourth trip.'

'Bob's the whitest man around here,' the barman stated. 'He didn't deserve this. Hell, no. She's going bad, is she, Ginger? Best have another pint before you push on.'

'I will,' Ginger agreed, pushing his glass across the counter. 'She's a heller, Sam. I ain't seen a fire go faster nor stronger. If the wind gets up with the moon she'll beat the one in '22 and that gutted the bleeding district.'

'How came it to get such a hold, Ginger?'

The grimy man straightened his tired back, and his voice was grim.

'It was lit just in the right place, Sam. That's why.'

'Lit?'

'Yes. It's gone clean through the Naroo valley and it's out on the flats now. God knows when or where it will stop, or the stock it'll take or the men it'll ruin. But I saw it lit, Sam, and the beggar that lit it.'

'Hell. Who was he?'

'Don't know. Couldn't see his bleeding face. But listen. I

was at the well up by Dingo's Gap. You know it, Sam. A great yellow car comes up the road and stops in the gap. Out gets a bird and starts to smoke a cigarette and have a good look round. The wind was blowing through the gap nicely. Anyone wanting to start a fire couldn't have chosen a better spot. This bird, when he'd had his look round, drops his cigarette end on to the grass and drives off like hell. It took me the best part of half an hour to get across the gully from the well, by then half the side of the valley was alight.'

'Bloody swine.'

'You've said it.' Ginger's voice was not raised, but there was meaning in it. 'The boys all know about that yellow car. I told Bob Martin first thing. He was mad right enough, but he never said a word. We'll get the car and the bird, Sam, not a doubt. Then there'll be an accident.'

The last sentence was spoken curiously quietly. As Overley, his heart thumping, stole back to the front door, he heard the barman's quiet reply.

'Them birds is better dead.'

Overley fumbled badly with the switch as he got into the yellow car and for one ghastly moment he could not find the starter button. He imagined that the hotel door would jerk open and that a grimy man who spoke with quiet certainty about murder would leap on the running-board and seize him. The thing was sheer madness, of the movies, bad melodrama, but he could not doubt that the madness was real. What he had seen and heard as he stood with the sweat breaking out on him in that dark stuffy passage was not fancy. A countryside was blazing, men's homes were being burnt. Feeling very sick, Overley realised that in the wild places to which he was a stranger people must have been lynched for less than that. And the lynchers were waiting for him in the dark.

Without lights he drove as fast as he dared out of the township. Then he nearly hit a fence, and switched on his side lamps. He hated doing that, advertising the exact position of the car, but he could not see to drive in the dark. The car was on a broad main stock road heading, he imagined, roughly north, though his sense of direction was never good. The fire, the glow of it reddening the dark sky, was behind him to the right, over some hills. He must get away from its neighbourhood. But the road was vile and high speed with only side lamps very difficult. He drove for a mile or two, his mind too dazed with fear to allow him to analyse the posi-



tion, his one concern to get away from the neighbourhood. Just abreast of a road that forked to the right off the main route he was forced into sheer panic. Far off down the straight way ahead of him the headlamps of an approaching car showed beyond a rise as twin beams searching the sky. He swung his car down the road to the right, switched off his side lamps and attempted again to drive in the dark. Hitting a fence post, he stopped. Beyond the near front wing there was no damage, but getting out to make an examination Overley was shaking badly. The car on the main road passed straight on towards the township, travelling fast. Overley was considering the question of turning and getting back to the way he had been going when the lights of two more cars showed where he had seen the first. That barred the main road to him; he could not risk his yellow car being caught in the glare of those head-lamps. He must stick to the side road and hope that he would not meet anyone. If, as he guessed, these cars using the stock route were filled with men collected from the neighbourhood to help fight the fire they were not coming his way. That was something. He switched on his side lamps again and drove on. His way curved to the right, more in the direction of the fire, but he had no choice.

It was not safe to stop yet, but presently he would and examine his map. The man Ginger, who talked so quietly about murder, had not recognised him, only his car. Bob Martin when told how the fire started had said nothing, although of course he must have known who was in the yellow car. So, unless he actually encountered Martin, it was the car and not himself that was the danger. In any light its canary paint proclaimed it. Yet it was his only means of escape. He could not abandon it with its evidence of his identity. On foot in that open country he would be an easy prey. His scared eyes searching the dark, fear turning every blacker shadow into a group of waiting men, he drove on.

A wind was getting up; it was blowing through the offside window quite strongly and it was curiously hot, bringing with it the smell of fire. The wind brought Overley another vision of that lamplit bar and the grimy, tired man saying 'If the wind gets up with the moon.' The road had turned again; Overley had lost his sense of direction; he did not know when or where the moon should rise. Moons had never concerned him before. Had there been a moon last night? Not when they sat in the patch of garden and Bob Martin had talked of his home, now burned, with pride. But—

was he sure?—yes, he was perfectly—he had looked from his bed of rocks through the open window to a tin wool-shed silver in a light almost as bright as northern day. Moons did concern him now. The southern moon shining on his yellow car might cost him his life.

The yellow car was climbing a gentle gradient to the summit of a ridge of hills when the moon appeared ahead, a great ball of amber that leapt from the shelter of the hill-top with uncanny speed, that paled relentlessly from amber to primrose, from primrose to glowing white, diminishing in size, increasing in power. To Overley it seemed no more than a matter of seconds before the protection of the dark had gone, the reddened sky had lightened to a vast luminous dome, and the moon rode secure, giving shape and detail and colour to that open shelterless land.

Nearing the crest of the hill three dark shapes sprang from behind a bush into the road ahead and before he recognised three terrified kangaroos flying from danger he allowed the car to swerve dangerously. A queer wish came to him to know whether he or those ungainly leaping beasts were the more frightened. He wanted desperately to have himself and his ideas and fancies well in hand, to be cool and ready for any emergency that might face him beyond the crest of the hill. But panic had got him and he felt his senses numb. His mind would not work beyond the repetition that men were watching for him, that he must escape them, that he must hurry. Then the yellow car reached the crest and Overley, for the first time, saw the fire which he had lit.

The moon, aloof and disdainful, shone on a broad flat valley which writhed and twisted in agony. The leeward end of it was shrouded in smoke which for a mile or so kept low and flat before the wind, streaming smoothly like water over a weir, then rising, beyond its first hurried rush, into great billowing moon-silvered clouds and fantastic columns. The windward end of the valley was still twitching in the pains of death. In two places, far distant from each other, buildings flamed; in many places fencing posts glowed as though the dead land still bled; but there was mainly stillness there, something motionless and silent, something which the moon could not illumine to any life or colour, just the charred carcass of a land that had been living.

Between the streaming smoke that bandaged the eyes of the living land, and the silent desolation, that had no need of bandaging, the destroyer was busy. From one side of the valley to the other,

dashing forward here, hanging back a little there, but maintaining a steadily irregular advance, a band of fire was spread. It was active and thorough, peering, searching, running smoothly like spilt molten metal, then bursting into spurting flame upon some fatter prize. Hotly, vivid and terrifying, it lived, a monstrous incarnation of vitality whose sole purpose was destruction. And as it lived and worked it spoke. Not in splutters and crackling but in a deep triumphant roar.

Overley stopped the car, appalled. The terror of fire was a thing he had never imagined. The might of the terror which he had loosed left him gaping. The road he followed led straight into the smoke; the band of fire moved down the valley at the pace of a man running. He did not know what to do. A car touched by the breath of that band would have no chance. He looked back the way he had come and saw two or three miles behind him the head-lamps of another car. There was no retreat. The slope down his side of the valley was not burning, for some reason the fire moved along the foot never climbing. He guessed at a road across which it could not leap, and drove on to investigate. The heat as he dropped down into the valley was getting bad and the wind was much stronger. He saw the road which stopped the fire from climbing and, approaching it, tried to reason out how fire was fought. Would the fighters be in front of the fire or behind it? If behind, then by following this road he would run into them; if in front, by going straight on he would find them in the smoke. But the car behind him was moving fast. He must decide. The fire was getting too near. The roar of it was awful. Then, through the roar, he heard screaming. On to the road which protected the hillside dashed animals that glowed and screamed. Sheep that burned, literally burned. He had a sight of them running senselessly on the road, falling, kicking, lying still. Blind with fear he drove on into the smoke.

Those poor beasts burning, their terror and their pain brought Overley pure panic, for the sight of them told him that he had passed beyond the world of decorous reason, beyond the chance of pleading and defence. In that terror and destruction, if he, the man who had lit the fire, were caught he would not be allowed to escape. They would kill him as an act of justice. He must trust to speed to get him somehow beyond fire and men.

The road took him at an angle away from the advancing front of the fire, whose voice in the smoke area was not quite so loud.

The smoke itself travelled mainly about ten feet off the ground with patches here and there that eddied down choking him and blinding him; but the farther he got from the fire the higher the smoke rose. It blew about a lot and the moonlight got through it sufficiently for him to drive. He covered a mile or more in the smoke area and the sickness of his panic eased a little because he was getting farther away from the terror of fire. Running into a dense patch of smoke he had to slow down; and as he slowed he heard men's voices. He was out of the patch of smoke before his mind registered anything but the sound of voices, out into a space of almost clear moonlight. As far as he could see till the line disappeared again in smoke men were working frantically, burning and beating out patches of grass, making the road a firebreak.

It seemed to Overley that they recognised his car almost before he saw them. Shouts went down the line and men stopped their frantic working. He heard one call distinctly, 'God, boys, the beggar's come back,' the rest was confused by a singing in his ears and the thumping of his heart. A dozen or more of the men nearest to him spread across the road, running forward. In the passing of a moment he had come from the shelter of smoke to the front of an attack. The advancing men were not shouting; the moonlight on their sweating, blackened, haggard faces showed Overley a savageness he had never seen before. They were too near him, he could not turn the car and run. If he charged that attacking line he would charge into more attackers. It was the finish; he was done. Then a stone hit his windscreen, starring but not breaking the glass. The blow, the opening of violence, roused him. He saw to the right of the road a gap in the wire fence and a track leading through it. There was a man not thirty feet from the gap, but, as he drove furiously for it, Overley noticed that the man did not move; he stood and grinned. As the car passed he even waved his hand. Glancing into the driving mirror Overley saw that the attackers were busy with the gap, hauling something across it. They had started shouting again, and the note of satisfaction, of triumph, in their yells was plain.

As an eddy of smoke blew round the car again, muffling the sound of yelling, shutting out all sight but a moving redness in the fog before him, Overley understood. They had got what they wanted, and got it easily. If he went on towards that moving roaring glow, if he waited, he would be burned. In panic he had taken to the track, and the track had been barred behind him. It

was getting stifling hot and he could not see. The fire was running at him in his trap, how fast he did not know. The wind about the car was like the draught of a furnace; the smoke had become much thicker. He must get away from a dozen gallons of petrol and chance, somehow, breaking through that line of waiting men before he was burned. He stopped, and as he stopped the driver's door opened and a blackened sweating face was pushed forward close to his. Overley called aloud 'My God!'

'Don't squeak, rabbit,' Martin commanded, panting, 'shift into the other seat. And quick.'

Overley slid past the gear lever and the hand-brake. In his blind fear he found curious relief in an act of obedience.

Martin did not speak as he got into the driver's seat and engaged gear. He drove off like a man wholly concentrated on his job. Overley peering at him could just distinguish that his mouth was set and that his eyes searched the smoke with strained intensity. The wheel went over to the right; the car lurched. Martin accelerated and straightened out on the new course. The inside of the car was filled with smoke, which caught the throat and eyes. Overley started to wind up the window next to him, but Martin, without turning his head, cursed.

'Leave it, you bloody fool,' he snarled. 'Do you want to asphyxiate me, damn you.'

The smoke about them rose and they were out in the filtered moonlight again. The little man at the wheel handled the car well; he drove at an amazing speed over rough ground, turning and twisting with a track that Overley in daylight with calm nerves would have been hard put to it to find. Once only he spoke, after straightening out from a double bend.

'Good car,' he muttered, 'she'll do it now with a spot of luck.'

And he opened out the throttle and clung to the wheel, fixing his eyes on some mark ahead.

Overley sat in a stupor of reaction; the thing had passed out of his hands; that brought him through his fear a species of dazed content.

The car dashed into thick smoke, hot as flame itself. Overley could no longer see Martin; he could only feel that, while he accelerated, the little man was holding the wheel rigid, glaring towards some unseen mark, giving his whole being to one supreme effort to keep a dead straight course. The intenseness of that concentration stirred Overley horribly; it brought him the certainty



of imminent crisis. They were racing the fire to some given point, and the race was close. They were being scorched now, and the glare to the left through the smoke was flame thinly veiled. The voice of the fire had altered too; it was no longer one voice that roared triumphantly; it was a hundred voices, hissing, cracking, whistling. Overley dared not watch to see it coming; he shut his eyes and his mind prayed dumbly for escape.

The engine ceased to drive; the brakes were jammed on; and Overley shot forward and hit his head against the starred wind-screen. As the car came to a standstill, Martin jumped out, shouting. Then he ran round the front and hauled Overley out.

'Hell,' he said. 'Why can't you watch where you're ramming your thick head. Run, damn you, run.'

Overley, his head humming, helped by Martin, ran up rising ground. Then he was told to lie down; and he lay behind a rock, peering round it.

The car was on the stock road, on to which the burning sheep had come to die, almost into the fence. He and Martin lay a few yards up the slope of hill. Scarcely more than a hundred yards away, but across the stock road, defeated by it, the band of fire advanced. Overley, peering from behind the shelter of the rock, had one sight of the leaping terror of it, then while it passed them down the valley he was much occupied in being violently sick. After he had been sick he lay for a time exhausted. When he moved again the fire was three hundred yards or more farther on.

As he opened his eyes, Martin was standing in the moonlight looking down at him. And the little man's face was the incarnation of contempt.

'If,' Martin suggested, 'you have quite finished your various demonstrations of manly strength, you might resume your journey. By some strange miscarriage of justice your car has escaped. It may relieve your nerves to know that the paint-work is not what it was. You go, keeping your handiwork on the left, until you reach a turning to the right, where you can drop me. The turning to the right will take you above what was my home. But don't call in and ask Maria for a cup of tea. She might refuse it. Ready.'

Overley staggered to his feet and tottered.

'Yes,' he said, and asked a question because he had, not because he wanted, to ask it. 'What would they have done if they had caught me?'

'What they did, if I couldn't have stopped them, which I doubt.

Arson isn't a healthy pastime here. But they'd have been sorry for it in the morning.'

Overley was conscious of a measure of relief. If he had imagined the danger, Martin's contempt would have been beyond endurance. They walked to the blistered car in silence; and in silence drove to the turning to the right. There Martin got out, but stood with his hand upon the door, a tattered, grimed figure, haggard with fatigue.

'One thing about you interests me,' he said. 'Why did you come back?'

Overley explained that he had feared recognition from passing traffic and being forced off the road had lost himself.

'With a car that can leave anything about here standing and a country you can drive across pretty well as you wish,' Martin commented. 'I see. Blind panic from the word go! Well, that sounds about your form.'

The utter scorn behind the words entered Overley's dulled consciousness. He was aware that it had gone into the store of his memory, and that it would remain there unforgotten. His mind was not working properly, but it seemed to him imperative that he should say something to the man who had saved his life.

'Martin,' he began. 'I . . . there are no words . . .'

The little man stiffened, savageness taking the place of scorn on his face.

'Beat it,' he ordered, 'back to your world—which counts so much.'

The door slammed and Overley drove on. Glancing back he saw a small figure in the moonlight, outlined against the glow of fire. Its back was turned and it moved purposefully but with the heaviness of great fatigue.

The day before he sailed from Sydney for home Overley, after careful inspection of its new, shining, canary paint, gave instructions about the despatch of his car. He then went to the club where he was staying and sat down to the writing of a letter. The writing did not go well: careful explanation and rounded phrase found the waste-paper basket. At last he sealed a note of a few lines:

DEAR MARTIN,

Settle the claims as you think fit, and many thanks.

Please accept the car. I liked the paint before I visited Naroo; but now I'm hoping that it's not my colour.

Yours,

AUSTEN OVERLEY.

## THE CHINESE HERB.

BY ELIZABETH BONE.

EARLY references to tea occur in some of the ancient Chinese classics. It appears to have originated in the southern part of China, where the finest tea is still to be found. It is referred to by various names—Tou, Tseh, Ming, Ching and others. At first it seems to have been used solely for medicinal purposes and is alleged to have been very efficacious for 'delighting the soul, relieving fatigue, and repairing failing eyesight.' Its popularity increased to such an extent that in the fourth and fifth centuries there are constant references to it by the poets, among them Lotung who writes :

'The first cup moistens my lips and throat, the second breaks my loneliness, the third cup searches my barren entrail but to find therein some five thousand volumes of odd ideographs, the fourth cup raises a slight perspiration,—all the wrong of life passes away through my pores ; at the fifth cup I am purified ; the sixth cup calls me to the realms of the immortals : the seventh cup,—ah, but I could take no more—, I only feel the cool wind that rises in my sleeves. Where is Horaisan ?<sup>1</sup> Let me ride on this sweet breeze and waft away thither !'

Later it became the custom of the Emperors to bestow rare gifts of tea upon those ministers who particularly merited it. The tea of the Tang period is known as 'Cake tea,' for it was usually crushed and made into a sort of cake containing among its ingredients orange and lemon rind, ginger, spices and salt. The slice of lemon used by the Russians of to-day is probably a survival of this method of tea-making which has come down to them from their Tartar ancestors.

During the reign of the Emperor Taisung (763-779) lived the first and possibly the greatest of the tea philosophers, Luwuh, the author of the *Chaking*. All that remains of this work is three volumes and several isolated chapters from others. He begins by describing the plant, how and where it grows ; he then goes on to speak of the method of gathering and drying the leaves and gives a characteristic and beautiful description of the method of leaf

<sup>1</sup> Chinese Heaven.

selection. The leaves should, he says, be 'creased like the leathern boot of tartar horsemen, curl like the dewlap of a mighty bullock, unfold like a mist rising out of a ravine, gleam like a lake touched by a zephyr, and be wet and soft like fine earth newly swept by rain.' Later he deals with the complicated implements used in making tea. It is interesting to notice that Luwuh recommends blue china, claiming that it gives the tea a green iridescence not found with china of any other colour. Finally, Luwuh describes the actual making of the tea. He seems to have liked his tea without any of the usual ingredients of 'Cake tea.' He says that water from a mountain spring is to be preferred or, failing that, river water. There are three stages of boiling the water; the first boil is 'when the little bubbles like the eyes of fishes swim on the surface'; the second boil is 'when the bubbles are like crystal beads rolling in a fountain'; the third boil is 'when the billows surge wildly in the kettle.' The 'Cake tea' is then roasted in front of the fire before being shredded to a fine powder. Salt is added at the first boil and tea at the second. At the third boil a dipperful of cold water is poured into the kettle to settle the tea and revive the 'youth of the water.'

So famous was Luwuh for his tea-making that it became the mark of the epicure to recognise tea made by the 'master hand.' Indeed, it is said that one Mandarin owes his immortality to the fact that he was unable to appreciate good tea.

Not long after, 'Cake tea' died out and 'Powdered tea' took its place. This was prepared by grinding the leaves to a fine powder and whisking it up in hot water with a fine bamboo cane. The various ingredients of the earlier teas seem to have fallen into disuse. With the decline of the Ming Dynasty the 'Powdered tea' in its turn disappeared. We begin to find references to tea made by steeping the leaves in hot water, which must have been the method usually employed at the time when tea was first introduced into Europe.

The circumstances surrounding the actual introduction of tea into Europe are somewhat obscure. In 1590 a Jesuit Missionary writes that 'The Chinese possess a herb out of which they press a delicate juice which serves them as a drink instead of wine.' He does not, however, tell us whether he ventured to taste 'the delicate juice' or whether he brought any home with him. Later we learn that some Dutch merchants exchanged dried sage for the Chinese herb, and about the same time we hear of a Leyden doctor called

Botenkoe advocating tea as a remedy for almost any complaint—provided that the patient can be induced to drink 200 cups daily! It does not appear to have been a popular cure, for we find a German, Olearius, describing it as 'black water with an acrid taste.'

In 1639 a present of tea to the Czar was somewhat curtly declined by the Russian Ambassador to the Mogul court on the grounds that 'it would only be encumbering him with a commodity for which he had no use.' In 1641 in a *Treatise on Warm Beer* we find the author quoting the Jesuit Maffei to the effect that 'the Chinese do for the most part drink the hot strained liquor of a herb called "Chia".'

Tea found its way to England somewhere between 1590 and 1610, and by the middle of the seventeenth century it had become a fashionable luxury. Charles the Second's Queen, Catherine of Braganza, who had enjoyed tea in her native Portugal where it was already well known, was largely responsible for bringing it into vogue. So much was tea connected with her name that Edmund Waller, writing an ode to her on the occasion of her birthday, calls tea 'the best of herbs,' and further says that tea will

'Repress those vapours which the head invade  
And keep the palace of the soul serene.'

Thus in 1660 we read that Samuel Pepys says, 'I did send for a cup of tea (a China drink) of which I had never drank before'. Mrs. Pepys does not seem to have tasted it until June, 1667, when we are told that Samuel came 'home and found my wife making of tea, a drink which Mr. Pelling the pothecary tells her is good for her cold and defluxions.'

So much did the popularity of tea increase that in 1669 the East India Company obtained the monopoly of importing it and retained that privilege for more than a century.

About this time there appeared a fashionable movement which was to have a profound political reaction: the development of the Coffee Houses, where, in spite of their name, much more tea than coffee was consumed. Famous among others was 'Garways' at the Royal Exchange. Thomas Garway went so far as to extol the virtues of tea in a handbill: 'An Exact Description of the Growth, Quality and Virtues of the Leaf Tea. . . . Tea groweth upon little shrubs and bushes, the branches whereof are well garnished with white flowers that are yellow within, of the lightness and fashion of sweet briar, but in smell unlike.' There follows a careful



description of the plant, the method of cultivation, the drying and preparation of the tea. He then tells us of the drink that

‘It maketh the body active and lusty; it helpeth the headache giddiness and heaviness thereof; it removeth the obstructiveness of the spleen; it is very good against stone and gravel, cleaning the kidneys; it taketh away the difficulty of breathing, opening obstructions; it clearerth the sight; it removeth lassitude and cleanseth and purifieth acrid humours and a hot liver, causing good appetite and digestion, and particularly for men of corpulent body, and such as are good eaters of flesh; vanquisheth heavy dreams, easeth the frame and strengtheneth the memory; overcometh superfluous sleep and preventeth sleepiness in general, so that, a draught of the infusion being taken, whole nights may be spent in study without hurt to the body.’

For this panacea the price varied from about 16s. to £10 a pound.

In 1675 a blow fell on the Coffee Houses in the form of a Royal Proclamation requiring them to be closed on the grounds that ‘The retailing of Tea and Coffee might be an innocent trade, but as it was said to nourish sedition, spread lies and scandalise great men, it might be a common nuisance.’ They were, however, allowed to reopen some time later subject to a certain number of restrictions.

Indications of the great popularity of the ‘new beverage’ can be seen in the extent to which it figures in the literature and drama of the period. Thus in Congreve’s play, *The Double Dealer*, one of the characters remarks that ‘The ladies have retired to tea and scandal.’ In the *Spectator* there is a description of a fashionable young lady ‘taking her dish of tea, the infusion of a China plant sweetened with the pith of an Indian cane.’ Then one of the most famous of all remarks on tea, Pope to Queen Anne.

‘Here, thou great Anna! whom three realms obey  
Dost sometimes counsel take and sometimes tea.’

Which rhyme is an interesting sidelight on the pronunciation of the word.

Tea was not, however, universally acclaimed. John Wesley exhorts his followers to ‘abhor it as a deadly poison and renounce it from this very hour.’ But perhaps most vehement in his denunciation was Jonas Hanway, who, by declaring that by ‘tea drinking women lose their beauty and languish with weak digestions and low spirits, while men lose their stature and comeliness’ brought down upon his head the wrath of no less a person than Dr. Johnson, who,

in his defence of tea declared himself to be 'a hardened and shameless tea drinker whose kettle had scarcely time to cool, who with tea amuses the evening, with tea solaces the midnight and with tea welcomes the morning.'

Johnson was not alone among men of letters in his love of tea. De Quincey, in his *Confessions*, rhapsodises on the pleasures of tea-drinking, while Hazlitt drank large quantities of almost black tea, which he made by filling the teapot half full of tea leaves and then pouring on boiling water. This concoction he consumed before it had had time to infuse and with large quantities of sugar and cream.

In China to-day there are four 'Tea Harvests.' The first in early April when some of the finest teas are picked and the last in August when the shrubs are stripped bare of almost everything but their branches. The teas are of two types: the green teas and the black teas, the distinction being largely a matter of the method of drying. Green teas include such varieties as 'Young Hyson' (Yu-t sien) which translated freely means 'Outrider of the Rains,' and dark Oolong from the Land of the Black Dragon. Among other varieties in the black teas are 'Pekoe' (Pak-ho), 'the silver-haired one' (for the leaves are just unfolding when picked and like young beech leaves wear a silver fringe), and 'Souchong' (Siaouchung), 'the smallest of the plants.' The scented teas so sought by connoisseurs are prepared by placing the leaves in great pans in the warm Chinese sun and covering them with scented flowers, to each tea its own perfume. Jasmin, oleander, rose, peony, and gardenia are a few among those used. After a time the flower blossoms are removed and the tea packed in airtight boxes. Some of the more exotic types of scented teas never leave China, for, apart from the fact that they will not travel, the Chinese consider that they would not be adequately appreciated by an Occidental palate.

In China to-day tea is merely a beverage and a source of revenue to the country, but in Japan exists a development of the almost symbolic attitude adopted by the Chinese towards tea at the end of the Sung Dynasty and abandoned after the devastating inrush of the Mongol tribes. The Sung method of drying and making tea seems to have been introduced into Japan about 1191 by Yersaizenji who had been to China to study philosophy and returned with tea seeds which were successfully planted. Then began the long history of the Tea Masters of Japan which resulted in the very complicated Tea Ceremonies which are still carried on there. In this way Japan is the only country where something of the dignity and intellectual

attitude of mind towards tea survives. For in England—one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of the tea-drinking countries of the world—little or no respect or reverence is shown to tea. It is regarded rather as a somewhat uninteresting hot liquid to be drunk by women either as a harmless stimulant or to provide an excuse for a break in the afternoon routine. Appreciation of the finer shades of taste has been destroyed in many by the unpalatable character of the tea served in most restaurants and the majority of homes. Indeed, some among us have fallen to such depths of depravity as to be quite indifferent as to whether we are drinking what is euphemistically termed 'Indian tea' or the 'juice of the Chinese herb.'

### THE CAT.

THE timid field mouse is her prey.  
And the unseeing new-born mole.  
Yet she will challenge  
The screaming gull  
Of mighty wing and searing beak,  
And the dog  
With slavering jaw and raucous bark  
Will presently retreat  
Before the menace  
Of her unsheathed claws.

But the night changes her.  
Now she is afraid  
Of the things she knows not  
And cannot see.  
Yet they are phantoms  
Familiar to her eyes.  
Under the night's black robe she waits,  
The trembling victim who is never claimed.  
What dreadful shapes surround her,  
What terror do they breathe  
Into her lowered ear  
That she should crouch  
On quivering limbs  
Impatient for the dawn?

MICHAEL JOSEPH.

## HARK BACK! IX.

'EHEU FUGACES!'

BY WILFRID JELF.

THEY were good days those of the early eighties in Aldershot, and I try to persuade myself that this is no platitude evolved by the jaundiced mind of the *laudator temporis acti*! The vivid memories of childhood serve to lend a special enchantment to the view at fifty years' distance perhaps, but there was a glamour which is gone, a romance of dash and colour, an atmosphere of the *beau sabreur*, which was a part of everyday life in the place and penetrated even into the nursery of an old Crimea hut. In the daily walks across the old Canal, over the Queen's Parade, and into the North Camp Gardens, we were kept alive to the identity of every regiment in the station by the gay uniforms which were met with everywhere and were recognisable half a mile away, on mounted orderlies busily trotting about with leather despatch bags, parties at drill, and soldiers 'walking out.'

Childish fancies fastened naturally on to these distinctions. The traditions of every regiment were learnt and the uniform served to enhance the heroic atmosphere. For us the *fons et origo* lay in the Telegraph Battalion of the Corps of Royal Engineers. There in 'K' Lines stood our spiritual home, the old hut in which we all lived and had our being, and not a girl in the family to temper the instruments and toys of Mars with the influence of ministering angel. It was soldiers, soldiers, everywhere: outside on the roads and streets, indoors all over nursery floor and table. The weekly routine included attendance at Church parades in the little tin church by the canal bridge, route marches in marching order, sham fights and field days on the Fox Hills, Reviews and Queen's Birthday Parades in all the full-dress glories of Ceremonial on Laffan's Plain. And there was colour, colour, colour all the way.

Yet, all the time, wrapped as we were in this atmosphere of martial ardour, there was daily touch with the gentlest of elements at no greater distance than the hut next door. Here was a fairy house of ever-open welcome within which lived Juliana Horatia

Ewing, saint on earth, authoress of a divine refinement entirely her own, whose gentle handling beautified the rough exterior of the soldier's life with a constant inspiration of duty and self-sacrifice. *The Story of a Short Life, Jackanapes, and Snap-Dragons*, with the little fancy tales of *Soldier's Children, Mother's Birthday Review* and countless others, exquisitely illustrated by Andrée and Caldecott, all remain to-day as a living testimony to the influence of peace on earth and good will towards men, with which we came in daily contact. 'Julie' was the fairy godmother of all.

I suppose it was after nursery tea one January evening, 1885, when the daily transfer to the drawing-room had been duly carried out, that life presented its first set-back.

The relieving force for Khartoum was advancing rapidly across the black floor at the edge of the drawing-room carpet. The besieged city was holding out bravely at the foot of the yellow curtains, and General Gordon, the Public Hero of the Day, was standing gallantly on the battlements. The grown-ups were sitting round the tea-table, an unusually large influx of visitors it seemed that day, talking in subdued tones over some engrossing topic. But the talk of grown-ups was always a dull affair and not worth attention, certainly not at the psychological moment when the final assault was about to be delivered and the siege gloriously raised. The guns were in action and had commenced their silent bombardment of the besiegers' trenches two miles outside the city walls, and the assaulting troops were ready to storm the enemy's position when, in a moment, history repeated itself and the sun stood still over Ajalon.

'Too awful! . . . Oh, yes, Gordon's killed and Khartoum's fallen all right. Betrayed by the Government and politicians of course. . . . Gladstone will never be forgiven.'

Gordon killed! Gordon no longer holding the fort! For once the talk of the grown-ups commanded notice as the story unfolded itself round the tea-table and introduced the first riotous problem for youthful consideration.

And then—reaction! Betrayed, is he? Then on, on with the assault! Not a dervish shall escape now. The red tunics and white helmets break loose and swarm over the trenches: bloody hand-to-hand fighting with the bayonet follows and the enemy is overwhelmed. Hundreds of them turn and run: the cavalry ride after them and cut them down and not a man escapes. Nothing but the untimely arrival of Nurse on bed-time prevents the final



grim ceremonial of hanging a man called Gladstone on the walls of the City.

It would have done Mr. Beverley Nichols's heart good! Indeed it would.

But our great hero was dead now and could not be restored. Not a word passed that night in the course of the usually chatty routine of undressing, bath, bed: and the 'Lights Out' of the R.E. trumpeters at 10 p.m. found wide-open eyes still staring up at the ceiling of the night nursery.

Thus were early impressions made. One of the most moving, perhaps, was inspired by the departure of troops on foreign service. Always in the early hours the regiments would march through the camp on their way to the station and we would scramble out of bed to the window in our nightshirts to see them go by. In the half-light the blue or scarlet tunics, with the foreign service symbol of white helmet, seemed to enhance the atmosphere of parting and farewell. The crowds of friends accompanying them, the tearful faces trying to smile, here and there a father in the ranks carrying his child as a last privilege—it all hurt a good deal. Those traditional tunes played by the bands seemed to carry a special significance. 'The Girl I Left Behind Me': many of them indeed! 'Will he ne'er come back again?' bringing to mind the hazards of the climate for which the regiment might be bound. And that grandest and most soul-stirring of all old liets, 'Should auld acquaintance be forgot . . . for auld lang syne,' dying away over the crest of the slope leading down to Aldershot Town. These things are not easily forgotten.

And in time, sure enough, the poignant moment was brought more closely home. Sir Charles Warren's expedition to Bechuanaland made calls on the Aldershot garrison and at the shortest notice the Father of six was under orders to proceed to South Africa with half of the Telegraph Battalion. In the early hours of the morning I stood outside the old hut and saw him go by. Tears rolled down my cheeks, partly of grief at the parting, partly, I must confess, of mortification that higher authority on the maternal side should have decided against the 'two babies' accompanying their four elder brothers to the station.

There I stood, then, on the roadside, a forlorn figure no doubt, as the troops passed up the hill and the strains of the band grew fainter. But higher authority had not reckoned with Sir Galahad, who dropped from the clouds in the shape of 2nd Lieutenant Aylmer

Hunter-Weston. This gallant knight, proved friend and counsellor of the nursery, had been sent back to the lines with a message and was now hurrying on again after his troop. As he passed, he caught sight of me and, braving the wrath of a flouted mother as he braved many a stirring situation later in his adventurous life, seized me by the waist, tucked me under his arm like a small pig for market, and ran up the road in pursuit of the disappearing column.

So I saw the train steam out of the station after all, amid waving handkerchiefs and cheers—those forced ‘hurrahs’ so akin to tears—and it all ended in two red lights fading away in the early morning mists while eyes were hastily dried. Thence back to the nursery without reprimand and with *amour propre* satisfactorily restored.

But, when all’s said and done, these were the low lights of the picture. The daily round, the common task, brought its unqualified delights. Every day a ride on the pony under the watchful eye of Roughriding Sergeant Fairchild; rides attended by occasional disaster calculated to shatter any promise of nerve in the budding Nimrod. For Mousie was a Shetland with an iron mouth and a keen sense of humour, a fatal combination which one day landed us on the big drum of the band of an infantry battalion on the line of march, a predicament of galling humiliation from which a friendly Commanding Officer ultimately salved us.

Again the education of youth is incomplete without the art of swimming. In the early summer mornings, therefore, armed with a towel and a large crust of bread apiece, we would sally forth with Corporal Jenkins to a bathing pool beside the riding *manèges* on the canal bank. Here the gallant Corporal would put us through our swimming and diving lessons with a thoroughness beyond all praise until, like small bedraggled tadpoles, we were allowed to scramble back to terra firma and take comfort in our generous ration. A fine practical soldier, Corporal Jenkins, who never skimmed his duty!

And so on, throughout all the general life of the Station, the spirit of domestic ease found ample room and time in life’s daily curriculum. Moreover, the Aldershot of the day was basking in an age of leisure, peace, and plenty, for the Station boasted no less than two steeplechase courses and staged brilliant National Hunt meetings of great frequency at each. Galloping thoroughbred horses stood in every private stable in the cavalry lines and those of other mounted units, while the greatest amateur jockey of the age—I might almost say, of all time—was provided by the infantry!

Roddy Owen, of the Lancashire Fusiliers, of course, stood out as the finest horseman in the Army, and his services were in demand not only at Aldershot but at every meeting in the country. One course was situated at Tweseldown, where it still flourishes to-day, while the other lay between the camps and alongside the road joining them on the site of the present Command Recreation Grounds. The grand-stand for these grounds actually covers the old open ditch and its succeeding Regulation Fence. It was at this open ditch, with its raised guard-rail, that we invariably took up our positions attended by an anxious nursery staff, for the turning-point of every race was reached at this point, and after clearing the open ditch every rider would begin to make his effort. Two fences more and the course bending to the right led up the straight to the winning-post, in front of the stand and marquees, which were set up below the old gymnasium of yellow brick which still stands. The field started off on their right-handed journey from beyond the tents until they were lost behind the hill, now razed to the level by the hand of man but at that time the site of the Harrier Kennels. They would come into view again as the course bent gradually to the right, running parallel to the canal, over the water-jump at the bank-side, and round the corner on which now stand the buildings of the *haute école* of Army Physical Training.

It was from this point that the tense excitement of our little party would reach fever-point. As the field of gay silk jackets swept the corner from the canal and the horses straightened out and came literally thundering down at the open ditch and guard-rail, our hearts stood still. Swish, swish, over, over, down, over—one down, always one and sometimes more (to the satisfaction I grieve to relate of our thirst for modified sensation). I can see them now bearing down on that fence on the second circuit for the Garrison Cup, all clearing the fence and every man with his whip out: green jacket with gold braid gaining on the light blue, then on the white, and finally overhauling primrose in the straight as the caps and shoulders of the riders could be seen over the heads of the roaring crowds, green still forcing its way to the front and winning with plenty in hand.

Gentlemen riders all. Aye! there was money to burn in those days and plenty of time in which to do it. The spirit of unrest and the week-end habit were the undreamed nightmares of a distant future.

We had other excitements too—too many, probably, for those

in positions of responsibility, but glorious moments of thrill for the young and the ignorant. Owing to the wooden structure of the Crimea huts and their proximity to one another, the danger of fire was ever present and outbreaks were frequent. To meet these grave risks certain mobile fire screens, running on low iron-tyred wheels and arranged in such a way that corrugated-iron sheets could be pulled up on chains to form a solid screen between huts, were issued to each set of lines. The inlying fire pickets were trained to the manipulation and rapid movement of these fearsome instruments and the noise involved by the process was shattering. Frequently these fire alarms would rouse the whole camp in the middle of the night, and we became peculiarly sensitive to the first note of the first bugle. There was something eerie and sinister about that fire call, which roused us instantly from deepest slumber and held us wide awake and spellbound, waiting for the fire screens to go roaring by to the shouting of orders and the blowing of trumpets and bugles calling the garrison to 'stand to.' And the final theatrical effect would be frequently provided by the red glare of the conflagration and its reflection on ceiling and wall and window blind.

Yes. Life was a simple and homely affair and held its little excitements too : but of all red-letter days May 24, with its annual Queen's Birthday Review, held pride of place.

I can see now the clouds of dust on the road leading from the Camp to Eelmore Bridge ; and the carriages, coaches, dogcarts, phaetons, victorias all on the way to the long roped-off enclosure on that great green expanse of Laffan's Plain, where the glittering of burnished helmets, drawn swords, and fixed bayonets in the distance marks the army converging on the base-line from all points of the two Camps. There drawn up from end to end on that sacred turf, a quarter of a mile away from us, that series of blue, scarlet, or dark-green standing out and boasting separate entities of pride and history, answering to the distant calls to order and attention as the long line is brought up into dressing and finally allowed to stand at ease. Meanwhile the whole assembled company awaits the arrival of the familiar Royal carriage containing that wonderful little figure of dignity and command, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Defender of the Faith, Empress of India.

She must be coming now. The crowds at the extreme end of the line have started cheering and the sound grows louder as the

carriage trots gaily to the saluting base and halts, while the massed bands play the National Anthem and the Royal Standard is broken at the masthead. There she is as debonair as ever under the little parasol, talking in her lively way with the Princess of Wales: noting everything, missing nothing. Beside the carriage at the flagstaff on which the Standard floats and flutters, the gilded staff under the venerable Duke of Cambridge, all superbly mounted, take post for the proceedings, with the Prince of Wales among them, in the uniform of the Tenth Hussars, ready to canter out and lead his regiment past his Mother when the time arrives.

Yes. These things stick in the minds of us all: but in the world of the small boy of four they are the living picture which never dies, not in fifty years of world upheavals.

The troops are on the move. The great long line is breaking up from its right flank and units are wheeling to their right in succession, then to the left and to the left again, bringing them on to the marching-past line in front of us.

The Horse Artillery first, with their brightly varnished little 12-pr. guns and their incomparable teams: collar-harness and every inch of leatherwork shining, steelwork like polished silver, and the sun showing off the bloom on the bays, chestnuts, and blacks of each individual battery. There's something about that tight-braided jacket of blue and gold, with the dashing long plume, and the gold lines of the officers' busbies, which sets the heart alight with the breathless glamour of romance. See the heads of the drivers turn like one man as their white whip stocks flash across together behind the collar of the off horse on the 'eyes right.' You can't beat it. There and then I set my seal to life's ambition at the age of four. I must be a Horse Artilleryman. The guns! The guns!

And as soon as the merry twinkling wheels of the guns have passed and the muzzles of the little pieces have shown the impeccable dressing of the line, we find the cavalry are passing. The Tenth Hussars, led by the Prince, followed by the Twelfth and Sixteenth Lancers with pennants flying gaily, the former in blue and scarlet, the latter scarlet and blue, and among them at this very moment a young trooper riding, whose lance is to be turned by the magic wand of fate into a Field-Marshal's baton. How gaily the horses fling their heads up and down all along the line and jingle their head-chains as they go by.

And when the Cavalry Brigade has passed, there follow the Field



Batteries, the Royal Engineers with their pontoons, and our regiments of Foot. Highland Regiments in scarlet tunics with the feathers of their bonnets fluttering gaily in the breeze, and their sporrans swinging together in time to the step of 'Bonnie Laddie': 60th Rifles in their shakos and dapper tunics of dark green with scarlet facings: short men but sturdy, lightest of light infantry, exercising their privilege of marching past with rifles at the trail and at the quickest of quick steps. Close on their heels their cousins of the Rifle Brigade, greenjackets all, with black facings in place of the red.

And finally, the backbone of our military history and exploits, the good old red-coat infantry of the line, inspired by the home traditions, pride of the County whose sons provide its personnel. These all come swinging by to the strains of their own Regimental marches, those for foreign service in the coming trooping season wearing the white helmet as distinguished from the black of the home-serving battalions. The grand old Buffs of Dragon fame, the Somerset Light Infantry, Sherwood Foresters, Royal Fusiliers, and countless others all passing the saluting base with Colours flying and the honour of County or City as their inspiration.

And if we allow our feelings to be stirred by the march past, what can we say of the gallop? Again the Horse Artillery carries our breath away as the gun-teams come thundering by with a glorious burst under perfect control, the gun-wheels spinning, and the busby lines of the drivers flying as they sit down and ride for the devil to take the hindmost—or the one that falls in front, as has happened before now. Again Hussars and Lancers and Heavy Dragoons charging by, squadron by squadron, with the clash and glitter of famous charges of their history brought vividly to mind.

And now the long line is reformed and at the given signal the *feu de joie* is started, that continuous rattle of rifle fire discharged into the air rippling so effectively down the front from right to left and back again up the rear rank. Three times is the roll of miniature thunder sent travelling down and up the line; and at last the great gay line of horse and foot, with swords drawn, bayonets fixed and colours flying, advances on the saluting base in review order, there to present arms in the Royal Salute to the acknowledgments of their mighty little Sovereign Lady, before the Royal carriage drives away to the Royal Pavilion through the cheers of her admiring subjects.

So the great parade is over and the troops disperse to barracks

and well-earned dinners—canteens and beer, of course, not Mothers' Institutes and lemonade—while Laffan's Plain resumes once more its peace and loveliness.

But the mental picture of it all remains to-day—fifty years after and a small voice still whispers:

'The guns! The guns!'

It was good of my old friend, Johnny Walker, who is something important on the staff nowadays, to ask me to come down for a tour round the Command last week and see something of the Army of to-day. I was glad to go, for I really was absurdly out of touch since hanging up my shield and buckler. There was work going on everywhere in the whole Command Area, it seemed, and I could take my choice, for everyone was out on some sort of training, much of it experimental.

In the Alton-Odiham country war had again broken out between those turbulent and uncomfortable neighbours, Northland and Southland, while elsewhere an unhappy battalion commander was struggling with the task of escorting to safety a convoy through a country bristling with bandits and marauding tribes. Wherever we went I saw undreamed-of novelties.

I saw machinery in every shape and form, manœuvring, twisting, and turning this way and that; tanks in colossal mass and tiny nameless objects like hip-baths on tractors adding their quota to the din. Dragons roared by hideous of design, and armoured cars of more pleasing proportions, with here and there a human head clad in a tam o' shanter peering out on top like the look-out man in the conning tower of a submarine. I saw guns, light and heavy with gun detachments complete, bowling along at a steady rate of knots behind their tractors: and—well, there was no end to the machinery that I saw!

Later, in a useful piece of undulating heather country, we came on infantry apparently dressed for a day's stalking (on which in fact they were engaged) and I learned that this was the new experimental uniform. Nothing could have been better for the ghillie of the Forest, and the soldiers looked the part.

In the area south of the Hartford Bridge Flats a battle was raging. A deadly silence reigned on both sides. Everyone was writing orders. One mile away to a flank two Brigades of Artillery cleverly concealed were heavily engaged in survey operations. Young and earnest officers were evolving works of art of astounding

beauty and accuracy, while others, more harassed I thought, were wrestling with sums and mathematical conundrums of the Senior Wrangler variety. When I asked how soon they would be opening fire, I was told probably some time next day if the infantry fire-plan could be co-ordinated in time. If not, it would be the day after. It took us a good deal less than that in the days of our old muzzle-loaders, of course, but I didn't say so.

But it was all so thorough, so sound, so efficient. Problems had been set and probed unfailingly to the bottom. The monotone of the colour scheme of the Army and its entire equipment alone stamped it with the hall-mark of severe research and serious study. No distractions of gay or garish colour could be allowed to influence the policy.

All day long the sky overhead had been alive with aeroplanes. Some looked like flies, others like ravens, and man was conscious of the watchful eye over every movement on this mortal earth. But at last away to the west my eye caught a glimpse of rapidity and manoeuvre. Armoured cars and light vehicles were bending, jinking, and wheeling in a skilfully conducted movement to a flank, while a section of guns behind light tractors curveted and careered about with them. Johnny looked at them through his field-glasses.

'We'll go over and have a look at those,' he said. 'That's the Eleventh Hussars Armoured Cars and the new experimental section of mechanised Horse Artillery. You'll like that.'

It shook me. I will confess now that I had been struggling with my better feelings for some time and cursing myself for a silly, sentimental old fool.

'We can be there in ten minutes and you'll be thrilled,' he continued as we got into the car: 'The Eleventh are simply wonderful and are going to be more famous than ever in their dashing new rôle. And you'll like to see the Horse Artillery experimenting, won't you? They look like doing great things too. It's a section of "M" Battery.'

'Thank you,' I said weakly. I had been Captain of the old Troop once.

But I think he noticed something was up, for the next thing he said was: 'Mind you, I'm rather inclined to think that the pendulum will shortly begin to swing the other way. Anyway, that's what they're saying in Truefitt's.'

It was towards evening on the second day that I started on my

homeward journey and I found myself on the Fleet Road with all the old familiar landmarks round me. There was the Long Valley to my left, looking like a miniature Sahara as it always had when I was being run away with by Mousie into apparently endless space. There was Cocked Hat Wood, and away to the south Caesar's Camp outlined on the skyline, and yet again further to the left the old clock face of the Cambridge Hospital. I was paddling along thinking over all these things, when, finding myself passing Eelmore Bridge, I pulled up at the side of the road and walked across it for a look at the old scene. I would play with my little tin soldiers again and set them up on that glorious table of Laffan's Plain. Yes. There it was! Spread out before me in its incomparable freshness, with the bloom of gorse and broom filling the evening air with their old accustomed sweetness, while I sat down and pondered over the changes in this mortal life to modern war and its inexorable, crushing weight.

And as I looked absently at the picture before me there sprang up once more that line of flashing points and blazing colour. I saw the Royal Standard break and flutter in its appointed place. I saw the Royal carriage, with the horses taken out, standing under it. And in another moment the Horse Artillery in its old glory came thundering by and was lost in a cloud of dust, while immediately behind followed the Eleventh Hussars, charging squadron by squadron in the blue and crimson splendour of Lord Cardigan's 'Cherry-pickers,' which has made the epic of The Light Brigade what it is in the history books and picture galleries of old England for generations to come.

'Eheu fugaces!' I said with a sigh as I shook out my pipe on my boot and started walking back.

'Ichabod, Ichabod!' croaked an old carrion crow in misquotation but in evident sympathy.

I plead guilty. I'm a bow-and-arrow man.

*[As the late Colonel Jelf wrote in the prologue to "Hark Back I," in the issue of September last, "Alas! The day's work is done."—G.]*

## THE RUNNING BROOKS.

- Mr. Justice McCardie* : George Pollock (Lane, 15s. n.).  
*The Nine Magazines of Kodansha* : Seiji Noma (Methuen, 10s. 6d. n.).  
*The Naked Truth* : Luigi Pirandello (Lane, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*The Evening Standard Book of Best Short Stories* (Second Series) : (Archer, 3s. 6d. n.).  
*Bassett* : Stella Gibbons (Longmans, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*Crown and Covenant* : D. T. H. McLellan (Murray, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*Earth Memories* : Llewelyn Powys (Lane, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*The Meaning of the Groups* : A Symposium (Methuen, 5s. n.).  
*The Behaviour of Animals* : E. S. Russell (Arnold, 10s. 6d. n.).  
*Country Mixture* : H. Atwood Clark (Allan, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*From Track to By-Pass* : T. W. Wilkinson (Methuen, 10s. 6d. n.).  
*Memoirs of a Camp Follower* : Philip Gosse (Longmans, 10s. 6d. n.).  
*The Happy Housewife* : Helen Simpson (Hodder & Stoughton, 5s. n.).  
*Unheard Melodies* : Lord Gorell (Murray, 5s. n.).

Two 'lives' are prominent in interest among the books of the month. In his official biography of *Mr. Justice McCardie* Mr. George Pollock draws a vivid, sympathetic portrait of the judge whose name, because he applied the law in the spirit of a reformer and was often a severe critic of the system it was his duty to administer, was not infrequently associated with controversy. As he himself declared, he had 'no respect for a rule of law whose sole claim to esteem is based on its antiquity and its remoteness from everyday life.' This aspect of 'a man of the people' who 'knew, loved and understood humanity' is clearly brought out by Mr. Pollock not only in his own estimate of the character of his subject—an estimate founded on intimate knowledge and amplified by access to the judge's private papers—but in the records and judgments in many of Mr. McCardie's famous cases to which a large part of the book is devoted.

Mr. Seiji Noma—whom it is almost impossible to resist calling the Northcliffe of Japan—can claim what is probably a unique distinction in that his 'autobiography' has been given to the world before he himself has been able to read it. If, after translation into his own language, its perusal gives him as much pleasure and entertainment as the present version should afford for English readers, his labours in providing what he calls 'the crude ore,' from which his able collaborator, Mr. Shunkichi Akimoto, has



minted 'the fresh coin,' will be amply repaid. For *The Nine Magazines of Kodansha* is amusing, exciting, instructive, and shrewd. It is also amazingly frank—not with the frankness of sensationalism but with that of complete sincerity. Mr. Noma is intensely interested in himself, in his failures as well as his successes, no less in his own faults (and how unaffected is his quite frequent *mea culpa*) than in his virtues, and, with the instinct of the true journalist, he captures and rivets attention because he always goes straight to the point. The book divides naturally into two parts; the first, concerned with Mr. Noma's childhood and young manhood, is full of delightful pictures of Japanese home and student life; the second chronicles the inception and building up of the great publishing business whose products appear to be not the least of the factors influencing national opinion and training the imagination and taste of the youth of Japan.

*The Naked Truth* is the second volume of Pirandello's short stories to appear in an English translation. Most of them can best be described as tragi-comedies, than which there is no crueller word as applied to life and no more difficult literary medium to handle successfully. Some of Pirandello's effects are the result of character, others of situation. But in all these tales his treatment of his varied material is as sure as it is pointed. Only a skilled craftsman can deal simply with simplicities whether of psychology or of circumstance. In this respect these studies of Italian peasants—the gems of the present collection—set down as they are in a spirit of ironical detachment, are memorable examples of the art which conceals art.

We imagine that the word 'best' in the title of *The Evening Standard Book of Best Short Stories* (Second Series) applies to the general rather than to the particular, since it is not stated whether the contribution of any one of the twenty-four authors represented was selected as his or her 'best.' However that may be, the collection is an interesting one, and the fact that the demand for short stories is sufficient to justify the publishers in giving us so much for so little is a significant sign of the trend of popular appreciation.

A good deal of Miss Stella Gibbons's *Bassett* is rather like looking through the wrong end of a telescope. Her characters are so clearly defined, yet so remote, and are so neatly framed. Only Miss Baker has any of her edges blurred by real humanity. This common little woman who, when she was 'axed' from a paper pattern emporium, invested her savings and a legacy in the estab-

lishment of a country boarding-house, is much more interesting than her partner and counterfoil, the decayed-genteel Miss Padscoe, or the rich Shellings whose incursions into the story merely distract the attention of author and reader from the main plot. For all its patches of excellent comedy and the lightness and dexterity with which Miss Gibbons wields her satirical pen, the book leaves an impression of having been tossed off rather than thought out.

Mr. D. T. H. McLellan already has two good novels to his credit. His third, *Crown and Covenant*, a stirring romance of the days of Montrose and the Covenanters, does more, as Mr. John Buchan's preface confirms, than fulfil the promise of his earlier work and strengthens the hope that in him is to be found a really valuable historical writer who not only knows his subject but can make it live and glow in cold print.

There is warmth and delicate colour and a lovely sense of quiet about the country scenes and settings of Mr. Llewelyn Powys's *Earth Memories*, a collection of essays in which (among others) under such big or such small, beautiful titles as 'Natural Happiness,' 'An Owl and a Swallow,' 'A Butterfly Secret,' he sets forth his own sensitive responses to nature's varied moods and manifestations and the philosophy that, to his mind, is the basis of all peace—a philosophy that exalts the mere state of living as the most blessed of all prerogatives and 'the way of the senses as the way of life.' Not that Mr. Powys is a materialist. Though he may not be aware of it his attitude towards these messengers out of whose 'twilight whisperings . . . supernatural heavens have originated' is in some respects the same as that of the oldest of the Christian churches, an attitude less esoteric than is generally supposed. This is a book to be thankful for. Even if on some points we disagree with the author, few could read it without gaining solace of spirit and refreshment of mind.

Instructive comment, criticism, and appreciation is offered in *The Meaning of the Groups* for those interested in more definite organisation of thought and the pooling of religious and philosophical experience. This is a symposium of articles by writers without as well as within what is sometimes called 'the Oxford Group Movement,' though the editor admits in his preface that this is 'an unfortunate designation.'

Some knowledge of biology, scientific or sociological, is so widespread nowadays that even as technical a book as Dr. E. S. Russell's *The Behaviour of Animals* is likely to find a public even

apart from those who will welcome it as a textbook. With the object of arousing interest 'in the fascinating study of animal behaviour' the author makes clear the principles upon which the observations of the amateur as well as the professional student can be usefully recorded and interpreted.

Of two books about the English countryside, *Country Mixture*, in which Mr. Atwood Clark tells of 'the good old days' in relation to farm labourers, squires, parsons and doctors, shooting, fishing and many other leisurely 'country contentments,' makes as pleasant reading as its title, while in *From Track to By-Pass*, Mr. T. W. Wilkinson traces the history of the English highways through all their picturesque vicissitudes in making and use.

The war—mercifully undramatised by horrors or heroics—is the background of *Memoirs of a Camp Follower* in which Dr. Philip Gosse records the use made of the comparatively scanty leisure of a battalion medical officer in studying bird life in and near the trenches and in collecting specimens of local fauna for English museums. The story of his adventures in watching and securing his feathered or furry objectives is interestingly and often amusingly told with illuminating sidelights on humanity in and outside the danger zone.

'We are going to do away with household drudgery almost completely,' says Miss Helen Simpson in *The Happy Housewife*. 'Our granddaughters will certainly see the end of washing up.' Unfortunately this prophesied millennium is not yet. In the meantime, while the same things still have to be done day after day in palaces, villas, flats and 'bachelor' rooms, this compact treatise on the elements of housekeeping is a mine of good advice on subjects ranging from the preliminaries of buying or leasing a house to the care of canaries, rabbits, and the human skin as well as every conceivable kind of domestic, marketing and gardening activity.

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Readers of CORNHILL may like to note the publication of Lord Gorell's latest volume of poems, *Unheard Melodies*, now collected for the first time, though a few have appeared in these pages. Of all the many tributes paid to Lord Gorell's work as a poet perhaps the most striking is Sir Henry Hadow's: 'Lord Gorell stands in the best English tradition; he is English in character, in landscape and in the particular sweetness and flexibility of his verse; above all he is animated by a passion for pure beauty.'

## THE 'CORNHILL' COMPETITION.

## DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 127.

THE Editor of the CORNHILL offers two prizes of books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue, to the two solvers of the Literary Acrostic, below, whose letters are opened first. Answers must be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, 50 Albemarle Street, W.1., and must contain the Coupon from page iii of the preliminary pages of this issue. They must reach the Editor by the 20th May.

'I ——— both ——— before the fire of life';  
It sinks; and I am ready to depart.

1. A damsel ——— a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw:

2. Clad in splendor as befits  
Her deity,  
Such a rural Queen  
All ——— hath not seen.

3. Let thy love in kisses ———  
On my lips and eyelids pale.

4. And gentle odours led my steps astray,  
—— with a sound of waters murmuring.

5. From rainbow clouds there flow not  
—— so bright to see.

Answer to Acrostic 125: Proem: *Ethereal Minstrel* (Wordsworth: *To a Sky-Lark*). 1. *Elysium* (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ii, 7). 2. *Tepolloml* (Southey: *Madoc in Wales*). 3. *Henderson* (Scott: *The Abbot*). 4. *EthiopS* (Emerson: *Berrying*). 5. *RegimentT* (Marlowe: *Edward the Second*, V, 1). 6. *EmperoR* (Keats: *Endymion*, Book IV). 7. *ApologuE* (Macaulay: *Mr. Robert Montgomery's Poems*). 8. *LaureL* (Tennyson: *To the Queen*).

No correct answers were received. A consolation prize of books to the value of £1 is awarded to Miss Corisande Bridges, 7 Alexandra Road, Clifton, Bristol, whose letter was the first to be opened.

The replies to the February competition, 'Parody of a well-known cliché,' were disappointing. Most of the answers were parodies of poems, not of clichés, and a prize therefore is not awarded.

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